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WITH A GOLDEN GLOBE AWARD AND OSCAR NOMINATION, THIS HOLLYWOOD IT GIRL IS BEING WATCHED — WHICH IS WHY SHE WON'T GO INTO WHOLE FOODS PAGE 16

OTTAWA metro®
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MISSION IN MALI

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird walks with Traore Ami Diallo, Mali's ambassador to Ottawa, on Wednesday. France's ambassador says the country is looking for financial backing from Canada for the international military mission in Mali. See story on Page 12. ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Presto! 10,000 passes doled out by OC Transpo

Transit. More than 180,000 cards planned to roll out after test period

GRAHAM LANKTREE
graham.lanktree@metronews.ca

After a seven month delay, OC Transpo's Presto pass is ready for a small-scale test launch Friday when the transit company plans to hand out 10,000 of the cards at stations throughout the city.

"Our focus will be on regular and frequent riders, students, pass and ticket users," said David Pepper, manager of business and operational services at OC Transpo, on Wednesday. Pepper added that riders will be able to buy their February passes and load them on the e-cards.

Presto cards will be handed out starting at 7 a.m. at four different transit stops where riders most often buy tickets and passes. Those include the St. Laurent, Lincoln Fields and Place d'Orléans stops, as well as at the Rideau Centre where the cards will be handed out at 8:30 a.m.

OC Transpo staff will be working lineups of customers waiting to buy tickets or their monthly passes handing out the cards and answering questions about how to use them.

Depending on the success of the test run and a final determination on the project by city hall, a full roll out of the system is expected in April. Pepper said in the intervening months OC Transpo will study the data coming from the 10,000 initial cards.

Technical problems with the e-card reader system became apparent in June 2012, ahead of the system's initially planned July 1 launch. The systems would fail to read cards and often "white screen" after attempts to reboot them. The delay cost Metrolinx, the provincially run company building the Presto System, an extra $3 million after the city said it would withhold payments after more delays were announced in November.

The project has cost the city $81.1 million, but compared to other similar systems around the world, it's quite reasonable, said Coun. Marianne Wilkinson.

"The one they have in London, England, cost almost double the amount to develop as this one has," she said. "We do get people saying, 'Chuck it and use somebody else's', we hear that occasionally. But we're good relative to other places."

By the numbers

$81.1M

Cost of implementing the Presto project in Ottawa

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Ottawa joins #IdleNoMore protests held across nation

Peaceful disruptions. Local demonstrators say movement is about educating Canadians

JOE LOFARO
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As Aboriginals blockaded bridges and roads across parts of Canada Wednesday — including the busiest Canada-U.S. border crossing point — some of their supporters in downtown Ottawa held a less disruptive demonstration in the name of Aboriginal rights.

About 75 people gathered in front of the World Exchange Plaza entrance at the intersection of Albert and Metcalfe Streets around lunch hour beating drums and singing as a group.

The peaceful demonstration was just one of several in Canada recently under the banner of the #IdleNoMore movement, which protests the Conservative government's Bill C45. First Nations say the bill tramples over treaty rights set out in the Constitution.

The Ottawa group kept mostly to the sidewalk and did not cause major traffic disruptions, compared to the group in Windsor, Ont., who snarled traffic at the Ambassador Bridge.

"So far the disruption has not been that major. I think it's getting people's attention," said Tony Belcourt, a former Métis leader. "If you have to do that, (then) you have to do that."

Belcourt said these demonstrations are not just about protest, but rather about drawing attention to First Nations grievances.

Tina Wynne from Moose Factory, Ont., agreed. She said she participated in Wednesday's demonstration in support of Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence's ongoing hunger strike on Victoria Island.

She said she supports blockades that "don't cause too much disruption." While she acknowledges blockades might upset motorists who need to get around, they also have an inherent educational aspect to them.

Demonstrators sing and bang on their drums at the intersection of Albert and Metcalfe streets, Wednesday, in a demonstration in support of the #IdleNoMore movement. JOE LOFARO/METRO

"The more educated people become, it's going to bring people together more. More than we are right now," said Wynne. "It can only get better as far as I can tell."

WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

Data on buses arriving early not accurate: Union head

City solicitor Rick O'Connor, left, David Pepper of OC Transpo customer relations, and OC Transpo general manager John Manconi all take questions at the city's transportation committee meeting Wednesday. GRAHAM LANKTREE/METRO

Data that shows OC Transpo drivers arrive at their stops early more often now than in the past isn't accurate, according to ATU Local 279 President Craig Watson.

Speaking at a transportation committee meeting Wednesday, Watson said there seems to be a disconnect between central operations and drivers in the field.

"Many times operators are contacted by control that they're running early, but the bus data shows they're on time," said Watson. "A prime example of this issue is on the No. 14 route, where 63 per cent of the buses were seen running early between Parkdale and Bronson Avenue in the westbound section."

Numbers presented by OC Transpo's manager of transit service design, Pat Scrimgeour, show a dip in the number of early buses between the end of 2011 and 2012.

Watson urged the city to improve its data collection because supervisors were ordered to crack down on bus drivers.

OC Transpo's general manager John Manconi said the company is aware of the problem.

"We're tightening things up," he said of the data. "We're getting input from bus operators.

There's data that comes through the system and we want driver input."

Overall, the third quarter report of 2012 was positive, showing that morning on-time performance has jumped from 69.4 per cent in the third quarter of 2011 to 71.4 per cent at the same time in 2012.

Still, annual ridership declined from 103.4 million in October 2010 to September 2011 to 101.6 million in the same period from 2011 to 2012.

Ridership in the third quarter is also down 4.4 per cent from a year earlier.

GRAHAM LANKTREE/METRO

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Police negotiation ends peacefully

Tactical squad. It took cops hours to get a Glebe resident, who claimed to have a firearm, out of his apartment

JOE LOFARO
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Ottawa police's tactical squad negotiated with a man for several hours inside his Glebe apartment Wednesday after a 911 caller notified police he allegedly had a firearm.

Police escorted a man, whose identity has not been released by police, on a stretcher and into an ambulance following his arrest.

Further investigation determined the firearm involved was a replica handgun, police said in a news release three hours after the operation had ended.

Duty Insp. John Medeiros said police received the 911 call at 11:30 a.m. It wasn't until 3:15 p.m. when he exited the three-story building at the intersection of Holmwood Avenue and Monk Street.

He had a white blanket draped on his head as he sat on the stretcher flanked by police and and a paramedic.

"Unfortunately, there was a bit of alcohol involved and so that was quite difficult. And so it ended moments ago in a peaceful fashion," Medeiros told reporters at the scene.

The man was arrested and was sent to the police station.

There were no injuries reported.

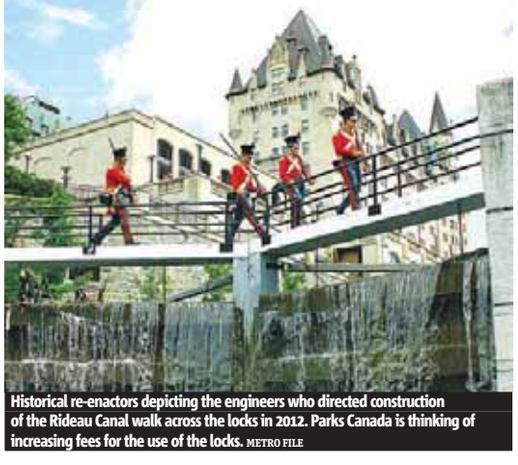
Parts of Monk Street, Holmwod Avenue, and Melgund Avenue were closed off to motorists for more than three hours and residents had to be escorted by police to their homes as a safety precaution.

"It may seem unusual to members of the public, but this is the type of incident that we, first of all, have to take the safety of everyone involved into consideration," said Medeiros. "We plan it in consultation with our various sections of our organization and our information that we have so that the end result is, as is in this case, a peaceful resolution to the incident where no one is injured. That's always our desired outcome."

No charges have been laid in the incident.

Police and a paramedic escort a man outside an apartment building on Holmwood Avenue, Wednesday, after police received a 911 call about a man who allegedly had a firearm. Further investigation revealed the firearm was a replica. JOE LOFARO/METRO

Rising fees sink all businesses: Heritage group



Historical re-enactors depicting the engineers who directed construction of the Rideau Canal walk across the locks in 2012. Parks Canada is thinking of increasing fees for the use of the locks. METRO FILE

Critics say a hike in fees for boats to use the Rideau Canal between Kingston and Ottawa will have a big impact on local economies.

But Parks Canada insists that the proposal to hike fees is just that: a proposal.

"It's a fee proposal that we have out there," said Andrew Campbell, Parks Canada's vice-president of external relations. "It's bringing our fees up so that the canal becomes more sustainable. We've met with a few business operators since the fees have gone out. We're trying to put in a fee schedule that allows people to succeed."

Yet the new fees, which appeared on Parks Canada's website last Friday, are "more likely to kill the canal than ensure its long-term sustainability, as the government suggests," wrote Liberal senator Jim Munson, in a release sent out Tuesday evening.

"The proposal calls for a shift to a system requiring two to four 'tickets' for a boat to pass through a lock station," Munson wrote. "The new fee structure is expected to at least triple the cost of many powerboat owners and more than double the cost for someone wishing to paddle the length of the canal in a canoe or kayak."

To use a complex lock system, such as the Ottawa locks by the Chateau Laurier, Campbell said, would cost 92 cents per foot of boat as opposed to 45 cents under the current system. On average, the fees for less complex locks will only rise from 45 cents a foot to 46 cents a foot, he added.

"It would have a very negative impact," said Anne-Marie Forcier, executive director of the Rideau Heritage Route Tourism Association of the proposed system. "Because of the way that the fee structure is proposed, the expense behind having a commercial kind of business on the Rideau is going to be prohibitive."

Fewer boats plying the waterway means the canal becomes less of an attraction, leading to a vicious cycle, she said. "The boats themselves become part of the attraction. There are 1 million visitors that flock to the Rideau to see the boats locking through. When that traffic drops, there's not as much of an attraction."

That means less money for the areas immediately surrounding locks, such as at the Smiths Falls Combined Lockstation, said Forcier, in an area that has already been hit by the departure of the Hershey chocolate factory, which was a mainstay of the community's economy.

"It has already impacted some of the cruise operators," said Forcier. "Some of the smaller ones just won't be able to work through the schedule change."

GRAHAM LANKTREE/METRO

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Police suspect connection in retail robberies

Stickups. Two suspects sought while police investigate links to other thefts

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Police are investigating whether suspects involved in two retail robberies on Jan. 4 are connected to each other and possibly other retail robberies in the region since in the new year.

On Jan. 4, police say two suspects, one of whom was armed with a tire iron, entered a convenience store in the 2200 block of Arch Street at 3:15 p.m. and demanded cash and cigarettes. They fled with an undisclosed amount of both, police said.

Thirty minutes later, two suspects entered a convenience store in the 1000 block of St. Laurent Boulevard and demanded cash. Police said they fled empty-handed.

The first suspect is described as a male with a darker complexion, approximately 25 years old, wearing a red waist-length winter coat and a fur-lined hood. The second suspect is described as a Caucasian male, approximately 25 years old, wearing an orange waist-length winter coat.

Staff Sgt. Michael Haarbosch said there have been 10 retail robberies — mostly with convenience stores and gas bars targeted — to date since Jan. 1 and police are looking back to see if there are more potential links to any of those, too.

Anyone with information with respect to these robberies is asked to contact the Ottawa Police Service Robbery Unit at 613-236-1222, extension 5116 or Crime Stoppers at 613-233-8477 (TIPS) or toll free at 1-800-222-8477.

Ottawa Police Service believe these two men participated in two robberies in the south end of the city on Jan. 4. CONTRIBUTED

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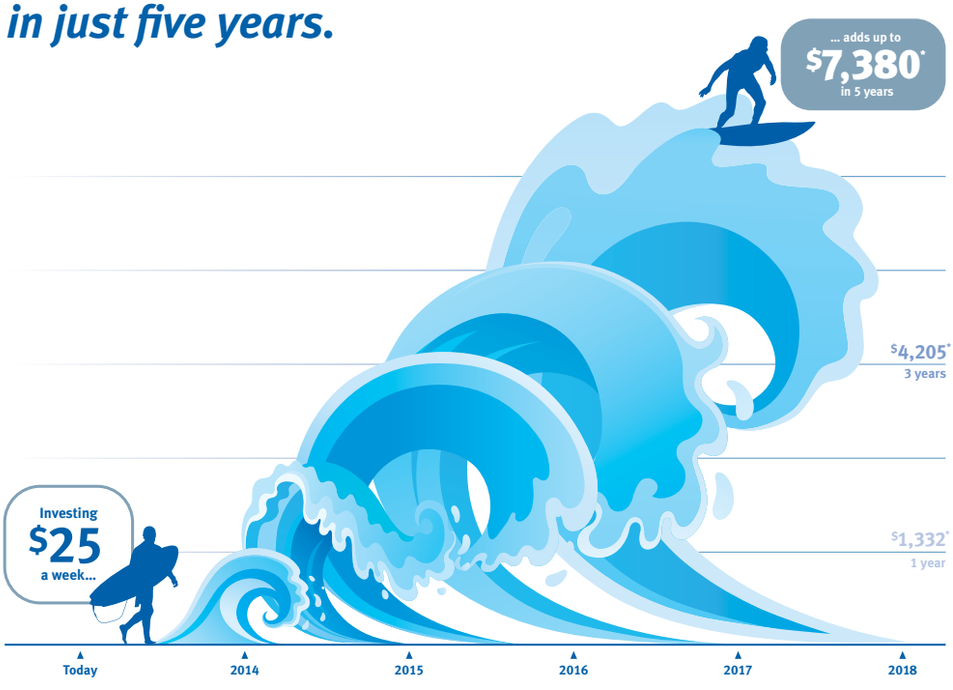

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Bill 115. Teachers continue push for repeal with protests in Ottawa

Ottawa's public high school teachers have planned demonstrations across the city for Thursday afternoon.

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation will protest in front of outgoing Premier Dalton McGuinty's office, Progressive Conservative Education Critic Lisa McLeod's office, as well as outside the office of Liberal MPP Bob Chiarelli.

"McGuinty says educations workers should protest after school and so we shall," reads a post on the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation Local 25 website.

OSSTF vice-president Harvey Bischoff said Wednesday the rallies, planned over two days across the province, are meant to continue teachers' message that the controversial Bill 115 must be repealed.

Bischoff said he was hopeful, after the ruling Liberals choose their next leader and the next premier of Ontario, the government will change its position.

"One assumes there will be a cabinet shuffle immediately afterwards," Bischoff said. "So with a new premier and a new minister of education, there's absolutely an opportunity for them to sit down with us and work this problem out. If they're willing to remove the legislative restrictions they have put on us, then we're certainly willing to talk."

Quoted

"If they're willing to remove the legislative restrictions they have put on us, then we're certainly willing to talk."
OSSTF vice-president Harvey Bischoff

The provincial Liberals will gather in Toronto over the Jan. 25 weekend to select a new leader — and, therefore, Ontario's next premier.

Bischoff said the unions would be happy to resume discussions with that premier — on the condition that he or she scraps Bill 115 and the contracts forced upon unions earlier this year.

Bischoff also indicated the unions will abide by a ruling by the Ontario Labour Relations Board that deemed any walkout during work hours to be an illegal strike. The board came to that decision after public elementary school teachers planned a "political protest" during work hours last Friday.

ALEX BOUTILIER/METRO

A protester stands outside outgoing Premier Dalton McGuinty's office in this file photo. Public high school teachers in Ottawa have planned a protest outside McGuinty's office, as well as PC MPP Lisa McLeod's and Liberal MPP Bob Chiarelli's offices, for Thursday. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Federal lawyer files claim against his own dept.

Whistle blower?
Edgar Schmidt claims internal policy means new legislation may infringe Charter rights

Quoted

"It troubled me for a long time and I raised the issue internally and eventually decided it was something that didn't conform to law."
Edgar Schmidt, former senior lawyer with the Department of Justice

A federal lawyer is challenging his own department in court over an internal policy that he says allows the government to cut corners, leaving open the possibility that legislation is enacted that infringes Canadians' Charter rights.

Edgar Schmidt, a senior lawyer with the Department of Justice for more than a decade, believes the government is failing to apply the proper litmus test to laws and regulations before enacting them.

Without proper quality control, it's possible there are laws and regulations in place that infringe on citizen rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Bill of Rights, he says. "It troubled me for a long time and I raised the issue internally and eventually decided it was something that didn't conform to law," Schmidt said.

Schmidt, who was in court this week, filed his claim on Dec. 14. The following day he was suspended from his job without pay for violating his duties as a public servant.

None of Schmidt's allegations have been proven in court. The department did not respond to a request for comment.

The statement of claim outlines an internal government policy that if an argument can be made for legislation — even if it's 95 per cent likely to be found inconsistent with the Charter or the Bill of Rights — no advice be given to the minister that would say the legislation contravenes the law.

By law, a minister is required to advise the House of Commons if new legislation could infringe on the Charter or Bill of Rights.

Recent court decisions give Schmidt's case added relevance.

This week a B.C. judge struck down a section of the immigration act that he ruled infringes on Charter rights because it is "unnecessarily broad." Others have rejected the Conservative government's mandatory minimum sentences for gun violations, saying they contravene the Charter.

Falling short of calling himself a whistleblower, Schmidt said his duty as a public servant and a lawyer isn't just to his bosses, but to all Canadians. "Sometimes I think we bequeath our Majesty with the executive of the state, but she represents the state as a whole," he said. "Our duty is not only to do what our managers want us to do." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Gordon Robertson. Former Clerk of the Privy Council dies at 95

Gordon Robertson, one of the most influential public servants of his time who served prime ministers from Mackenzie King to Pierre Trudeau, has died.

Robertson, who was 95, began his career as a public servant in 1941 at the Department of External Affairs under King. He was promoted to the prime minister's secretary in 1945, and served a number of roles until his retirement from public life in 1979.

"Mr. Robertson will be remembered as a great Canadian and a devoted public servant," said Prime Minister Stephen Harper, in a statement issued Wednesday evening. "On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to offer my sincerest condolences to the family and friends he leaves behind."

Robertson served as the Clerk of the Privy Council and secretary to cabinet from 1963 until 1975.

Following his retirement from the public service in 1979, Robertson served as the chancellor for Carleton University for a decade.

ALEX BOUTILIER/METRO

Overpass construction

Airport Parkway lane reduction set for Thursday

Ottawa City Hall is advising motorists that the Airport Parkway will be reduced to one southbound lane from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Thursday.

The temporary lane closure is to accommodate the construction of a pedestrian overpass, according to the city. The closure affects the Airport Parkway north of Hunt Club Road. METRO

Early-morning incident

Blaze destroys tractor trailer

Firefighters had to break open the doors to loading docks at the St. Laurent Shopping Centre early Wednesday to douse a fire that destroyed a 40-foot tractor trailer. Ottawa Fire Services received multiple 911 calls about smoke visible from the docks at around 3:49 a.m. Crews also extinguished a fire and a few hotspots in a nearby compactor.

Damages to the trailer, compactor and the building exterior are estimated at $200,000. Ottawa police are investigating. METRO

Suspect wanted

Police investigate retail robbery

Gatineau police are investigating after a man allegedly robbed a convenience store at 1001 chemin de Masson on Wednesday just after midnight.

Police say a suspect entered the store with a hand hidden in his pocket and demanded cash, then fled in his vehicle. He's described as a white, French-speaking male aged 30 to 40, with brown eyes and salt-and-pepper hair. He is about five-foot-10 and 160 pounds, and wore a beige sweater and camouflage-type pajamas. METRO

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TOP 10 SCAMS
Top Advertising Scam: Advertising Tools
Top Love Scam: Online Romance Scams
Top Financial Scam: Affinity Fraud

Better Business Bureau president and CEO Danielle Primrose reveals the bureau's Top Ten Scams of 2012, which include online romance scams, computer virus-fixing schemes and investment fraud. PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS/METRO IN VANCOUVER

Better Business Bureau's top 10 scams of 2012

Old cons, new twists. Scam artists will go to any lengths for cash, whether it's profiting off tragedy or tricking your poor old grandma

GRAHAM LANKTREE
graham.lanktree@metronews.ca

Scam artists in Ottawa have been posing as the Better Business Bureau to steal private data from companies, according to the actual Better Business Bureau.

The organization included that scheme in the top 10 scams of the year on Wednesday.

"The scammers take our identity and pretend to be the BBB and send online messages to consumers and businesses pretending to be us," said Diane Iadeluca, president and CEO of the Ottawa branch of the BBB. "One company clicked on a link and lost all their data. For a small company, this could be crippling if they lost their order or customer list."

Iadeluca said this type of scam, known as phishing, was the most popular one to hit the city in 2012. "We have a lot of consumers and businesses calling us saying, 'We got an email from you,'" she said. "The worst thing people can do is to click on those links."

By clicking a link from a respected organization or friend, you can inadvertently download a computer virus or other malicious code that can destroy your computer or lead to identity theft, she said, noting the scam also hit other groups such as the RCMP and Revenue Canada.

Another popular scam in Ottawa, said Iadeluca, was the "Grandparents Scam" where con artists pose as the grandchildren of seniors online, in text messages or phone calls and say they need money after being mugged, arrested or hurt.

"There's a lot of new twists to old scams," she said, noting that scammers can now glean facts from Facebook pages to add verisimilitude.

To fight back, consumers need to keep themselves educated. "It's sad to say, but don't be so trusting of strangers who are emailing or coming to your door asking for personal information, even your birth date," Iadeluca said.

"Make sure you don't respond to threats as well. Sometimes people will try to scare you by saying, 'If you don't pay this you will be sued by such and such lawyer.'"

Identity theft

"We have a lot of customers and businesses calling us, saying, 'We got an email from you.' The worst thing people can do is to click on those links."

Diane Iadeluca, president and CEO of the Ottawa Better Business Bureau

Scam of the Year

Topping the BBB's list this year was a con that cropped up recently following the Newtown, Conn., school massacre in which 20 kids were killed.

- Soon after the shooting, charity sites popped up looking for donations from concerned Canadians.
- The FBI has arrested one woman who posed as the aunt of one of the dead children.
- "That one was disgusting," said Iadeluca. "It just shows you how low some of these people will go."

RIDING REAL ESTATE'S NEXT WAVE

NEXTWAVE BRINGS 'RENOVATE AND SELL' SERVICE TO OTTAWA

WAVEBREAK MEDIA/THINKSTOCK

Ottawa's Nextwave Real Estate Ltd., founded in 2012, offers a unique service that takes advantage of several trends in the industry. Known as "renovate and sell," the service enables homeowners to maximize the value of their investments.

"The market for homes has never been more competitive," says Althea Brown, president and broker of record of Nextwave Real Estate. "This puts pressure on sellers to present their homes in the best light possible. We offer the expertise they need to do that."

A real estate agent by trade, Brown is also an experienced investor who has bought and renovated Ottawa homes for resale. Although her firm offers the full range of traditional services — listing and advertising properties, staging open houses and negotiating purchase agreements — Nextwave specializes in working with sellers to secure the best possible prices in a timely manner.

Nextwave starts by comparing a home with others in the same neighbourhood to identify its potential value. This is where an experienced eye is most valuable, according to Brown.

"Homebuyers are attracted not only by a specific property, but also by its surrounding neighbourhood," she says.

"So it's important that a home fits in; that its features are similar to those found in nearby properties. People who haven't moved for five years or longer often don't recognize that their home has become somewhat outdated, and, as a result, a little less appealing to potential buyers."

The analysis enables Nextwave to identify specific renovations that will align the property with the expectations of buyers. The renovations might involve new paint, flooring, or a complete bathroom overhaul. The firm then taps into its network of investors to finance the renovations, and hires and pays a licensed contractor to complete the work.

"If a seller has a licensed and bonded contractor that they'd prefer to work with, we're happy to use them," Brown says.

Once the home sells, the costs of the renovations are deducted from the proceeds.

"It's a win-win model," Brown says. "The seller gets a better price and a quicker sale, while the buyer gets a home of greater value."

RECENT CHANGES IN TODAY'S REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

STOCKBYTE/THINKSTOCK

A series of recent changes has impacted the way people buy and sell homes today, particularly Ottawa. Last year, the government of Canada put a cap on how much banks and finance companies can lend homebuyers, and changed the rules governing mortgage insurance on properties that sell for less than $1 million. The changes are designed to deter Canadians from taking on excessive debt, especially debt that uses mortgaged properties as collateral.

"The move helps prevent the kind of financial meltdown that happened in the United States," says Althea Brown, president of the Ottawa real estate brokerage Nextwave Real Estate. "I think it's a good policy, because it will, in combination with the changes made two years ago, make real estate markets more stable."

Two years ago, an agreement between the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) and Canada's Competition Bureau essentially established a new business model for the industry. For decades, almost all homes sold in Canada involved real estate firms contracted to provide the full range of services: From listing and advertising homes on its exclusive Multiple Listings Service® (MLS®), to organizing and hosting open houses and negotiating purchase agreements. The firms also provided referrals to other professionals, such as home inspectors, mortgage brokers and movers. Following a complaint lodged with the Competition Bureau, CREA agreed to allow agents to offer à la carte services.

"Buyers and sellers now have tremendous freedom," Brown says. "They can pay a flat fee to list a property on MLS®, for instance, then stage open houses on their own."

The changes have forced many real estate firms to adopt new business models based on fee-for-service rather than flat-rate commissions.

While the changes are welcome, Brown is quick to add a note of caution: "Buying and selling a home is typically the biggest financial transaction a consumer ever makes. The risks are significant and working with an experienced real estate agent is the best way to protect your investment."

Nextwave Real Estate Ltd. is located at 38 Auriga Dr., Suite 200.

For more information, call 613-738-0650 or visit nextwaverealestate.ca.

WIN/WIN FOR OTTAWA HOME SELLERS

In 2012, Althea Brown launched Nextwave Real Estate, based on a unique business model that takes advantage of recent changes in Ottawa's real estate market. Nextwave helps sellers access the capital needed to fund renovations that make properties more appealing to buyers.

A typical client is Tammy, a mother of two keen to sell her three-bedroom condominium in Blackburn Hamlet, yet unable to access the funds needed to do the renovations required to ensure the property competes well with others in the neighbourhood. Nextwave's group of private investors stepped up to pay for the renovation project now underway.

"I'm confident that the condo will sell faster and for a fairer price once the renovations are complete," says Althea Brown of Nextwave Real Estate.

"And the higher sale price means that Tammy can end up with more money in her pocket, even after deducting the cost of renovations."

Obama unveils $500M plan to curb gun violence

Your move, Congress. President bracing for blowback from gun owners, lawmakers and lobbyists

President Barack Obama on Wednesday launched the most sweeping effort to stop U.S. gun violence in nearly two decades, announcing a $500-million package that sets up a fight with Congress over bans on military-style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines just a month after a shooting in Connecticut killed 20 school children.

Obama signed 23 executive actions, which require no congressional approval. But the president, speaking at the White House, acknowledged the most sweeping, effective actions must be taken by lawmakers.

"To make a real and lasting difference ... Congress must act soon," Obama said.

The president appealed to the nation's conscience, but his announcement promises to lead to a bitter fight with a powerful pro-gun lobby that has long warned supporters that Obama wanted to take away their guns.

The U.S. has the highest rate of gun ownership in the world, and pro-gun groups see any move on gun restrictions as an offence against the right guaranteed by the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Critics counter that the country's founding fathers never could have foreseen assault weapons more than two centuries ago, when guns were intended for the common, not individual, defence (often stored in community areas) and rifles fired one laborious shot at a time.

"This is the land of the free and the home of the brave," Obama said, acknowledging the right to bear arms. "But we've also long realized ... that with rights come responsibilities." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barack Obama is working to implement a sweeping gun strategy that will likely be opposed by Republican lawmakers. CHARLES DHARAPAK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

President's daughters

NRA ad is 'cowardly': White House

The White House says a National Rifle Association video that makes reference to President Barack Obama's daughters is "repugnant and cowardly."

The comments referred to an online video from the pro-gun lobby that calls Obama an "elitist hypocrite" for having armed Secret Service agents protect his daughters at school while voicing skepticism about installing armed guards in all schools. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Judgment. Vancouver student's provocative photo sparks discussion

The words are written all the way up the back of the woman's leg. "Matronly" appears at her calf, "proper" at the knee and "whore" at the very top — words meant to reflect how women are often perceived based on the length of their skirt.

The provocative photo, called Judgment, was posted by Rosea Lake, a first-year university student at Capilano University in Vancouver, B.C., on her Tumblr site in early January. In a matter of days the photo went viral, with more than 280,000 people liking and reblogging it.

She took the photo as part of a high school art project last year as a way to reassess her assumptions and preconceptions about how women dress. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Student Rosea Lake's photo, titled Judgment. HANDOUT

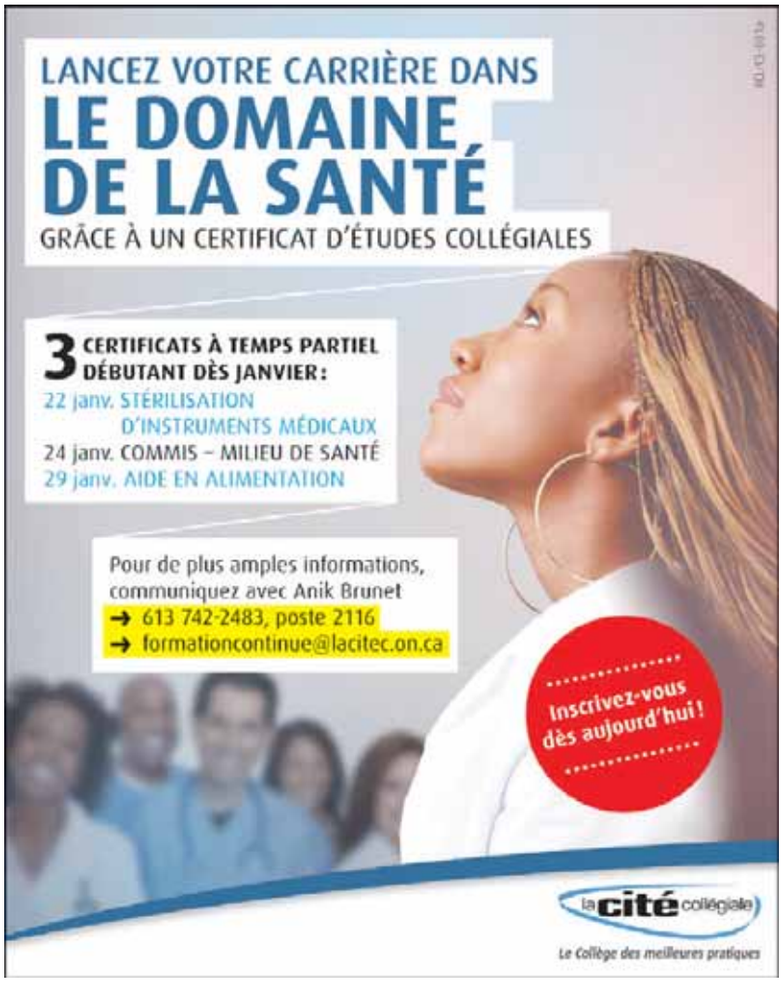
DNA

Study links genes to behaviour of bullying victims

The episodes of bullying that mar early grade school years for hundreds of children may be a partial result of the victim's DNA, a new study suggested Wednesday.

The behaviours that most often lead to exclusion and victimization in the classroom or schoolyard have their roots in a student's genes, the study said.

The findings were published on the website of the journal Child Development. THE CANADIAN PRESS


LANCEZ VOTRE CARRIÈRE DANS
LE DOMAINE DE LA SANTÉ
GRÂCE À UN CERTIFICAT D'ÉTUDES COLLÉGIALES
3 CERTIFICATS À TEMPS PARTIEL DÉBUTANT DÈS JANVIER:
22 janv. STÉRILISATION D'INSTRUMENTS MÉDICAUX
24 janv. COMMIS – MILIEU DE SANTÉ
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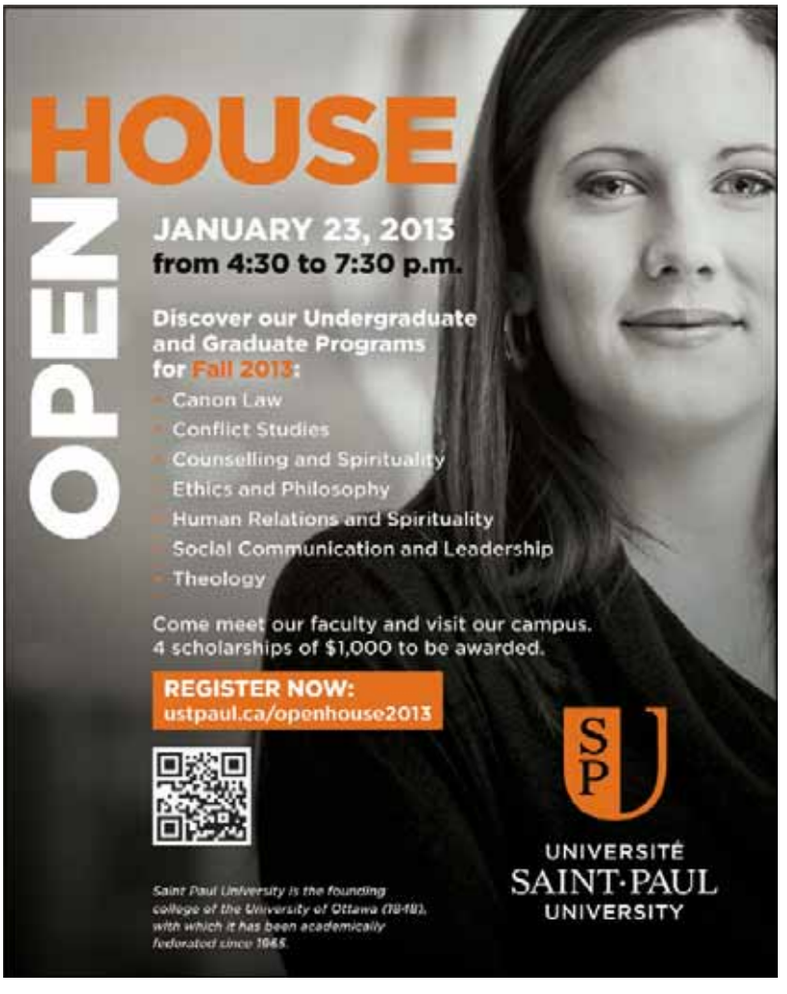
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Meet the granddaddy of cosmic structures

Startling discovery.
Massive quasar group pokes holes in Einstein's Cosmological Principle, which says that the universe is symmetrical

This gigantic structure, which scientists have named Huge-LQG, is a never-before-seen cluster of 73 quasars. UNIVERSITY OF LANCASHIRE

An international team of astronomers has found the largest structure ever in the universe.

The large quasar group is so big, it would take four billion years to cross it, travelling at the speed of light. By comparison, it would take just 2.5 million light years to get to the Andromeda Galaxy, our closest neighbour in the universe.

A staggering leap in size isn't the only piece of cosmic lore the discovery has shattered, however.

"The structure we found is a few per cent, say five per cent, of the size of the observable universe. It becomes hard to say the universe is uniform," lead author Dr. Roger Clowes of the University of Lancashire told Torstar News Service.

The modern theory known as the Cosmological Principle, the work of Albert Einstein, says the universe is symmetrical: the same in all directions.

"Ours is the most dramatic challenge to that," said Clowes.

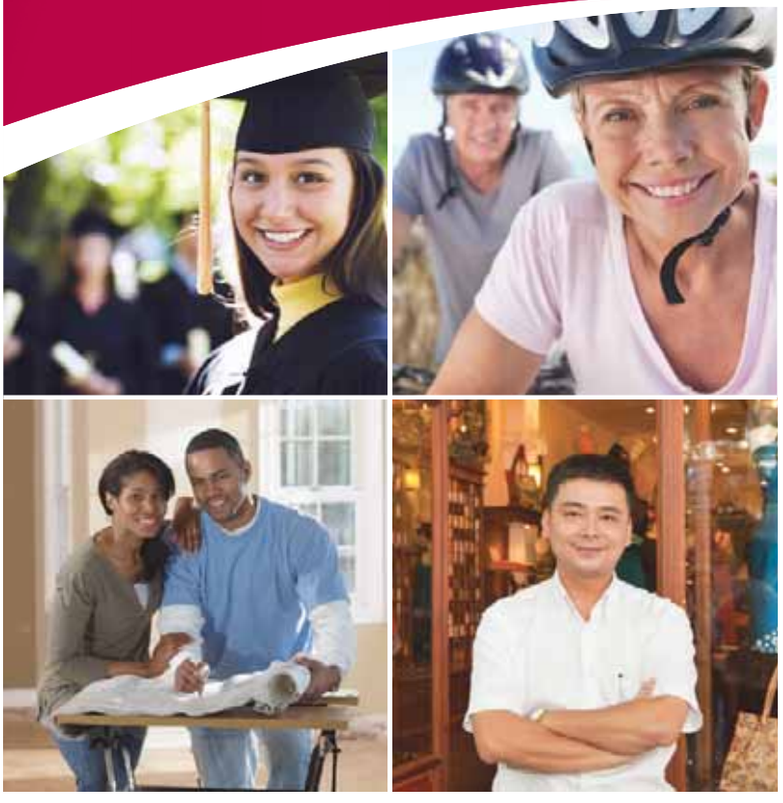
What does that mean? It "upsets the foundation of everything we do."

Clinging to the Cosmological Principle "makes life a lot simpler mathematically," he said, "so people have stuck with it for a long time, although it's never been demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

What is it?

- Large quasar groups are supermassive black holes typically at the centre of galaxies.

You're our reason to celebrate



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France needs to borrow our plane a bit longer; could use some cash, too

Trouble in Mali.
French envoy says money is needed from Canada and others to support fight against Islamist extremists

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird hosted a discussion about the situation in Mali Wednesday in Ottawa. The talks were with, from back right, Philippe Zeller, France's Ambassador to Canada, Traore Ami Diallo, Mali's Ambassador to Canada, and Goran Kouame, Ivory Coast's Ambassador to Canada. ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

France is looking for financial backing from Canada and the world to support the international military mission in Mali, says the country's Canadian envoy.

Ambassador Philippe Zeller also said Canada's contribution of a C-17 military transport plane could be extended beyond the initial one-week commitment.

"It's possible that this plane, that came from Trenton to south of France, might be used for some more time," the envoy said Wednesday just after his president, Francois Hollande, spoke to Prime Minister Stephen Harper by telephone.

Harper's office made no mention of extending the C-17 mission in a statement about the telephone call.

Zeller told The Canadian Press that his country is grateful for Canada's contribution of a military transport plane to the Mali mission, but says money is needed to support the international force, which will eventually be buttressed by 2,500 French troops.

"Of course, it's up to Canada," Zeller said in a wide-ranging interview prior to his meeting Wednesday with Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird and the ambassadors from Mali and the Ivory Coast.

Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara is current chair of the Economic Community of West African States, a key regional bloc.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

On the ground

Militants try to blend in

French soldiers pressed north in Mali territory occupied by radical Islamists on Wednesday, launching a land assault that was to put them in direct combat with al-Qaida-linked fighters "in one to 72 hours," military officials said.

Their presumed destination was the town of Diabaly, where fleeing residents said Islamist extremists were melting into the population to avoid being targeted by the French.

"They have beards. And they wear boubous (a flowing robe). No one approaches them. Everyone is afraid," said Ibrahim Komnotogo, who was out of town when the militants seized Diabaly over the weekend.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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TESTIMONIAL
After suffering from fatigue, headaches and chronic constipation, I did a cleanse and it changed my life. That was 7 years ago and I still cleanse 2-3 times per year. I have tried other cleanses but I always come back to Renew Life cleanses. They just WORK! Evelyn P. 2012-05-04.
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* Limit one coupon per purchase. Coupon expires February 28th, 2013.

Cirque du soleil to lay off 400 staff, most at HQ

Blame the loonie.
Company says they had a record year, but no profit due in part to production costs

The strong Canadian dollar, surging production costs and the worldwide economic downturn are all being blamed by Cirque du soleil for its decision to lay off 400 employees.

Most of the layoffs will be at the artistic giant's Montreal headquarters.

Company spokeswoman Renée-Claude Ménard moved to dispel speculation the Cirque is flailing.

"The first thing to say is that the circus is not in crisis," Ménard told a news conference Wednesday. "Let's get that straight.

"We had a record year in terms of tickets sold. We sold more than 14 million tickets this year. We had a record year for total revenue, with more than $1 billion."

Despite that, Cirque didn't make money, Ménard said. She said the powerful loonie hit Cirque hard in that its profit is affected by nearly $3 million for each cent the currency gains against the U.S. dollar.

The layoffs will begin by the end of this month and continue until the end of March.

Cirque employs about 5,000 people worldwide, including 2,000 in Montreal.

It still has 19 productions worldwide and is currently working on a new show that will open in May in Las Vegas.

Another touring production that will open in the spring of 2014 in Montreal is also in the works.

Cirque's performances have played to an estimated 15 million people since it was founded by street performer Guy Laliberté in 1984.

It has undertaken several years of unprecedented expansion amid the world economic meltdown in 2008, but has been forced to close four shows in the last couple of years.

Zed, which was playing to solid audiences at Tokyo Disney, ran from 2008 to 2011, when it was retired in the aftermath of an earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan. The popular Saltimbanco, which originally ran from 1992 to 2006, ended last year after a new tour.

Viva Elvis, which got mixed reviews, ran from February 2010 in Las Vegas and wound up last August. Zaia, Cirque's first resident show in Asia, ran from 2008 until last year and recorded lacklustre attendance. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Performers from Cirque du soleil perform at the 84th annual Academy Awards last year in Hollywood. GETTY IMAGES

Employment

Applicants with disabilities overlooked: Panel

Many companies struggling to find the right employees are overlooking a talented pool of disabled workers, a government-commissioned panel has found. The group found that almost 800,000 people with disabilities can work in Canada and almost half have post-secondary education. The panel found a willingness to hire workers with disabilities, but that more education is needed. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR 101.41¢ (-0.21¢)

TSX 12,608.82 (-33.15)

OIL $94.24 US (+96¢)

GOLD $1,683.20 US (-70¢)

Natural gas: $3.44 US (-2¢)
Dow Jones: 13,511.23 (-23.66)

Boeing 787s grounded over safety concerns

The FAA has grounded the Boeing 787 Dreamliner pending a safety check of the plane's lithium batteries.

For the second time in two weeks, a smoking or burning battery has been tied to an emergency aboard a 787.

Almost half of the 787s that have been delivered had been grounded for safety checks. And the latest incident raises the risk that the jet's electrical problems are more dangerous than previously thought.

It's a stunning setback for the Dreamliner, which was supposed to set a new standard for jet travel, but has been beset for more than a week by one mishap after another. The two episodes involving batteries appear to be the most worrisome yet.

It's unclear how much of the fundamental design will need to be changed. The remedy could range from relatively easy improvements to more extensive changes that could delay deliveries.

The 787s are a key part of Air Canada's strategy to grow its capacity and profitability. The carrier plans to transfer the 767 and Airbus A319 planes to new low-cost airline, Rouge.

On Wednesday, Japan's All Nippon Airways said pilots smelled something burning and received a message warning of battery problems while flying to Tokyo. They made an emergency landing and passengers evacuated using inflatable slides. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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GET YOUR FLU SHOT, JACKASS

HE SAYS... John Mazerolle metronews.ca

Flu season might seem like it's almost come and gone, but there's still time to get a flu shot, you big jerk.

Yeah, you heard me.

I'm insulting those of you who haven't received your flu shots yet — you doofuses or, if you prefer, doofii — because I figure if you haven't been jabbed yet, you're probably not going to get the late-but-still-effective poke due only to the gentle prodding of health-care providers. What you need is someone to needle you.

So get a flu shot, jackass.

And make no mistake: By not getting a flu shot you're being a jackass — a risk-taking, disease-spreading, conspiracy-minded (or maybe just lazy) jackass.

Take one for the team

Here's what I think: If you don't get your flu shot, maybe you're not that bright. Maybe you're the type of person who snickers when they read that something was published in the Annals of Family Medicine.

Here's what I think: If you don't get your flu shot, maybe you're not that bright. Maybe you're the type of person who snickers when they read that something was published in the Annals of Family Medicine.

Or maybe you base your health decisions on a YouTube video of a 1993 news report showing that a lone person in Iowa once got sick from a flu shot, which always makes me wonder what you think of, you know, food — what with the choking and the poisoning and the parasites.

Or maybe you're the sort of person who reads this TMZ tweet — "Hugh Jackman (says) flu shots don't work. Center for disease control says otherwise. Which side do you believe?" — and hasn't answered by the time they've read "Jackman."

Or maybe you just haven't gotten a flu shot because you're a sensible person who hasn't gotten around to it. Fine. Then here's why you need to get it:

- **The flu shot helps.** Estimates this year are that it cuts your risk in half. That means I'm 50 per cent less dangerous than you are and 3,000 per cent more intelligent.
- **The flu shot is necessary.** You can't get by just with hand-washing — not in a cruel, unsanitary world where many public bathrooms still have that towel-imitating cloth-thing that dangles down from a dispenser daring you to touch it. Most people just frown at it, their hands dripping, wondering what heinous acts might have been performed on it, only to leave it there, filthy, yet probably touched only 15 times, tops, since it was installed in 1973.
- **The flu shot saves lives.** Thousands — tens of thousands — of people die on average every year in North America because of the flu, and like most illnesses, it's particularly harsh on our most vulnerable, including our humour columnists, who don't get paid if they're too sick to go to work.

So I'm not trying to be holier-than-thou. I'm trying to drive home that I don't want the old, the young and infirm to get sick or worse, because they caught the flu from selfish, crazy you. In other words, I only complain because I care about you, want the best for you and, yes, maybe even love you.

You jackass.

Go on, get your flu shot. JESSICA KOURKOUNIS/GETTY IMAGES

A storm is a-brewin'

DAIMLER AG/CONTRIBUTED

Man-made weather

Artificial tornado fights fires indoors

It's famous worldwide for making robust Mercedes cars, and now German automobile producer Daimler seems adept at making weather. The Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart houses "the world's strongest artificially generated tornado." The 34.4-metre-high cyclone serves to eliminate smoke in the event of a fire. METRO

Artificial tornadoes

Energy firm could whip up a storm

Apart from quelling fires, man-made tornadoes could be used in producing energy. Canadian firm AVEtec Energy Corporation has developed a four-metre-diameter prototype that is designed to produce a 40-metre-high cyclone. The vortex would capture mechanical energy produced when heat is carried upward by convection in the atmosphere. METRO

Faking it

Man creates clouds for art's sake

Artificial weather phenomena has also entered the realm of the art world.

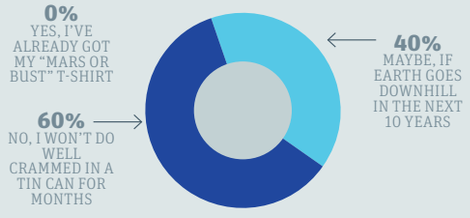
Dutch artist Berndnaut Smilde has created miniature clouds using a smoke machine, combined with indoor moisture and dramatic lighting to create an indoor cloud effect.

Smilde has described it as a "cartoon-like visualization of bad luck." METRO

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

Will you be applying for a one-way trip to Mars in 2023 with the Mars One project?


0%
YES, I'VE ALREADY GOT MY "MARS OR BUST" T-SHIRT
60%
NO, I WON'T DO WELL CRAMMED IN A TIN CAN FOR MONTHS
40%
MAYBE, IF EARTH GOES DOWNHILL IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Twitter

@yveewonder: Last time I checked revolving door partitions are for one person. #personalspace #slowdown #ottcity #Ottawa

@therobplummer: Cornmeal Coated, Pan Fried Catfish....#fatboys #dinnertime #ottawa #34murray http://t.co/yaMU83Yo

@amandacottreau: Hey tweeps! Do you know an #AmazingWoman in #Ottawa #Gatineau? Nominate her for #CHER2013! http://t.co/qtXZilOL

@PeterDudley: Heading out to Bells Corners in the west end of #Ottawa to meet friends for dinner.

@gutfrag: To all the folks who complain that #idlenomore protestors need to "get over it", actually, legally speaking, they need to do the opposite.

metro

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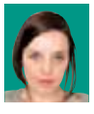
Cracked draws inspiration from the real-life experiences of an Emergency Task Force officer and also showcases some of Canada's top musical talent in its soundtrack. CONTRIBUTED/CBC

When things fall apart ...

Cracked. New series draws on real-life events and expertise in showing what it's like to be there for 'some of the worst moments in people's lives'



BACKSTAGE PASS
Jen Traplin
ottawa@metronews.ca

The executive producer behind Cracked, a new, one-hour-long Canadian crime drama on CBC, calls the series "a police procedural, but with a real twist."

"I think it's not like anything people have seen on television before," says Ottawa native and award winning filmmaker, producer and president of White Pine Pictures, Peter Raymont.

Cracked follows a group of detectives and mental health professionals based in the newly created Psych Crimes and Crisis Unit and stars David Sutcliffe (Gilmore Girls, Private Practice) as Detective Aidan Black and Stefanie von Pfetten (Battlestar Galactica) as forensic psychiatrist Dr. Daniella Ridley.

Not only does the show boast an all-Canadian cast, it also features some of Canada's top musicians. "One of the things we're very proud of in this series is how we've attracted some of Canada's top bands to licence us the music," Raymont explains.

"Wintersleep's song Weighty Ghost is the song that's on the series opening and we have music from Stars and Kathleen Edwards and Mother Mother and several other top groups."

The series draws real life inspiration from one of the show's co-creators, Calum de Hartog, an active police officer and a member of Toronto's elite Emergency Task Force.

Raymont says de Hartog's frontline experience brings the show to another level. "When Calum walked in the door, he was telling us all these stories about what the police go through in dealing with what they call EDPs — emotionally disturbed people.

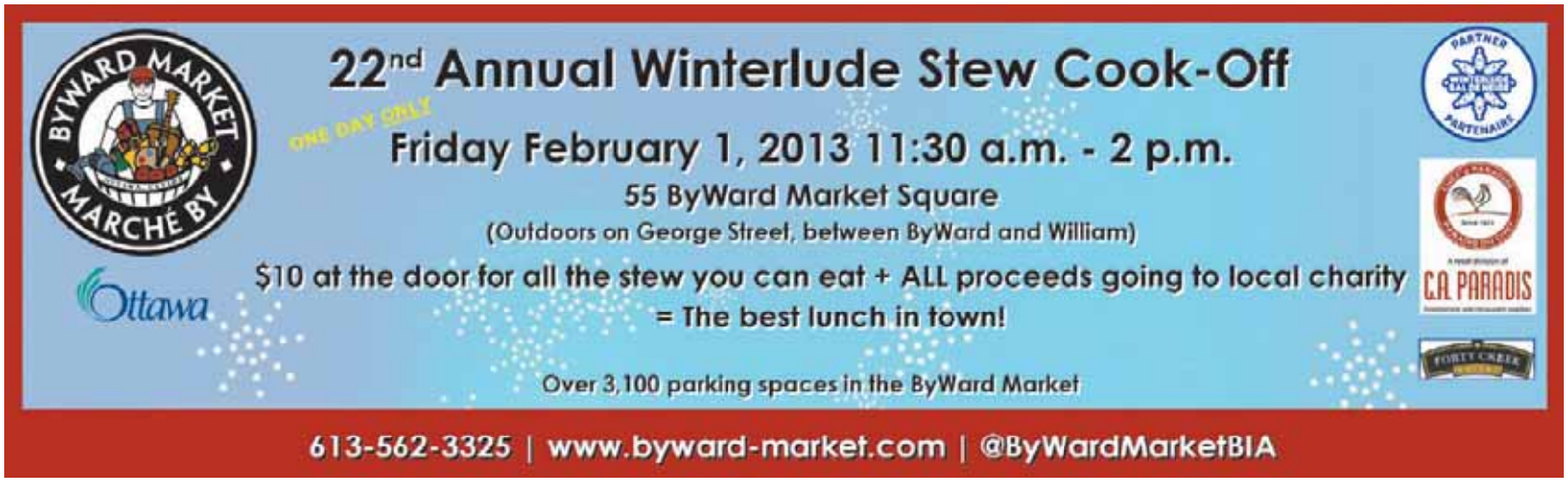
"He would take David out on ride-alongs and help give him of a feel of what it's like to be a police officer, to be there, as he often says, at some of the worst moments of people's lives."

The series deals with all sorts of mental illnesses, from schizophrenia, bipolar and post-partum depression to PTSD and teenage suicide. Even though the show is entertainment-based, Raymont hopes it helps to break down the stigma of mental health by getting people talking. "We hope it'll open the door to a larger public discussion about mental illness," he says.

"People want to know. It's always been one of the last taboos. Mental illness runs in many families and many of our lives have been touched by mental illness and, yet, it's not been talked about."

Watch it:

Catch Cracked on CBC every Tuesday at 9 p.m.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The Silver Lining and Hunger for fame

Interview. Jennifer Lawrence speaks to Metro about adjusting to the limelight and how she has managed to stay grounded

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News

Actress Jennifer Lawrence is a Golden Globe winner and Oscar nominee. CHRISTOPHER POLK/GETTY IMAGES

Talking to Golden Globe winner and Oscar nominee Jennifer Lawrence is always a treat, as she's the rare young actress who talks frankly and honestly about whatever she feels like without a hint of media training.

Here are some pearls of wisdom from our latest chat with the Silver Linings Playbook and Hunger Games star.

On adjusting to stardom
I feel so bad for Emma Stone, because she's where I was a few months ago. When it first happens, it's horrible because your entire life flips upside down and the entire planet starts treating you differently, and it's really hard to adjust and get used to, but then you get through it. People told me that it would come in waves, and they were right.

I texted Emma yesterday and I was like, "I'm walking down Rodeo Drive. Nothing!" And she was like, "The audacity!" (laughs). But yeah, there are bad days and there are good days.

On what she's learned from Bradley Cooper
He was the one who told me I can't go to Whole Foods (anymore), and I tested it and he was totally right. The paparazzi, they're like at every Whole Foods, it's insane. I had to say goodbye to Whole Foods. It's fine, I can get friends to get my groceries. I dipped my foot in the water and I was like, "You know what, you buy me groceries. I don't want Whole Foods to call the police again."

On trying to gain weight for Silver Linings Playbook
I was supposed to, but I was also dancing two hours a day. I kept trying to explain that to (director) David (O. Russell), because he was like, "You're not getting fatter." I had a Philly cheesesteak I think every day. They're on every street corner and they're delicious. And then at the end when I finally slowed down the dancing, it was like, "Yeah, I'm looking pretty good, right? Look at this." And then David's like, "Yeah, you're going to be in a tube top."

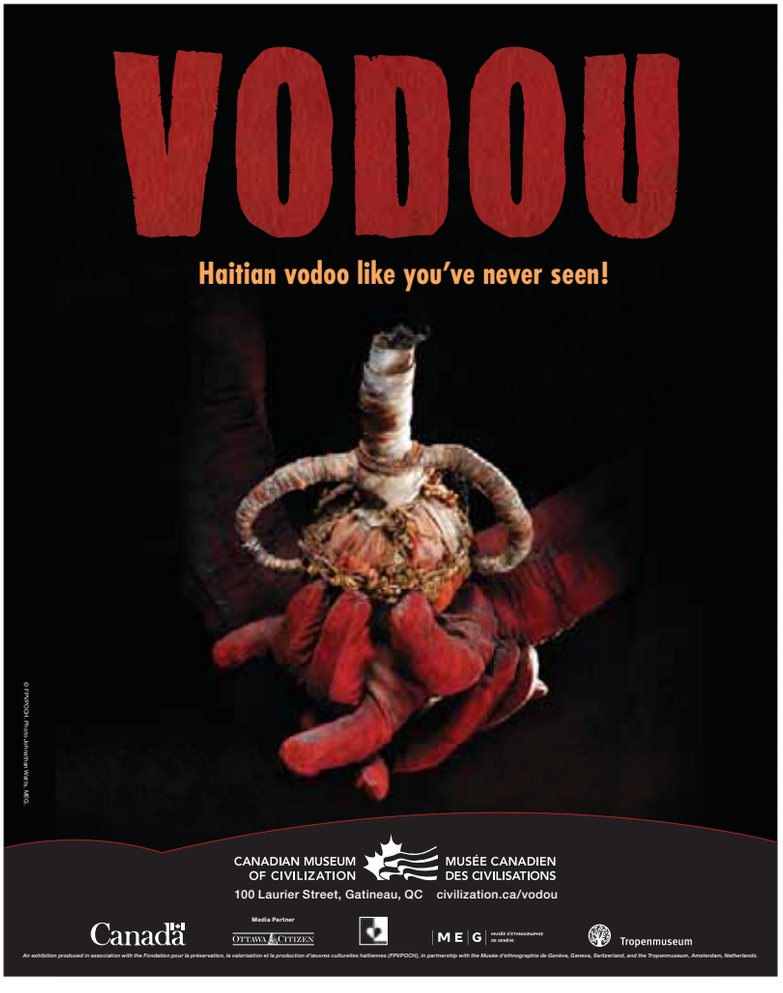
Quote

"He was the one who told me I can't go to Whole Foods (anymore), and I tested it and he was totally right. The paparazzi, they're like at every Whole Foods, it's insane."
Jennifer Lawrence
On what she's learned from Bradley Cooper.

On trying to stay grounded
I still want the same life that I grew up with. I still want a family, a normal family. I will have to make a couple of adjustments (because of my career). I'm at peace with myself because I think that maybe not having to deal with years of rejection at such a young age — I think that could definitely be damaging.

I can't imagine letting my young child go through something like that.

There were times when I was doing a movie once that was really emotionally hard for me.



METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Tattoo number two for Bieber in 2013

Justin Bieber's tattoo habit is insatiable. The 18-year-old singer has already gotten his second piece of body art of 2013, a set of Roman numerals across his collarbone, as revealed in an Instagram photo he posted of himself and producer Jamal Rashid, who got the matching digits on his bicep. In a comment on the photo, Rashid claims the numerals, "I IX VII V," stand for 1975 and have some spiritual meaning, though Bieber hasn't offered an explanation as to the meaning. In any event, if it's meant to be the year 1975, it should be "MCM-LXXV."

Justin Bieber. ALL IMAGES GETTY

Lindsay Lohan

Lohan 'caused $50,000 worth of hotel damages'

Lindsay Lohan reportedly did enough damage to her room at the W Hotel in New York's Union Square last summer that she's no longer welcome in the hotel, according to Us Weekly. "Her suite had so many cigarette burns, they had to change all the carpets. She did at least $50,000 worth of damage while partying," a source says. "She is not allowed back at any W hotel in NYC, ever."

The Word

Prince Harry named world's most eligible bachelor

He may be trouble-prone and lack his older brother's line of ascent to the British throne, but Prince Harry still beats out George Clooney to be named Town & Country magazine's Most Eligible Bachelor in the World for 2013. "He's the wild-card royal, the naughty one, the one who goes out with women, hangs out with a fast crowd, downs too many drinks, and goes home at the wrong moment. That's why we all like him best," the magazine's editors say. "Harry might not possess a towering intellect — he was a lackadaisical student at Eton, and he skipped university to go to Sandhurst, the English equivalent of West Point — but he is cooler and more appealing than his older brother, sweet as William undoubtedly is."

Twitter

@ElizabethHurley
Oh Lord, the rain.....

@ricky_martin
No matter how baddass you are, if a child hands you a plastic phone, you answer it

@ladygaga
So proud of @justinbieber and all the Beliebers! I'm only happy to see your fans growing in size, you all deserve it! Monsters support you!

@SteveMartinToGo
I'm tired, yet I still tweet

Elton John and David Furnish.

Elton John and husband David Furnish celebrate birth of second child

Elton John and David Furnish are parents once again, welcoming their second son, Elijah Joseph Daniel Furnish-John via surrogate late last week in Los Angeles, the singer announced on his website. "Both of us have longed to have children, but the reality that we now have two sons is almost unbelievable," John and Furnish tell Hello! magazine. "The birth of our second son completes our family in a most precious and perfect way. It is difficult to fully express how we are feeling at this time; we are just overwhelmed with happiness and excitement." The boy's birth comes just one day after John's rep was flatly denying reports that the couple was expecting another child.

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ANNASOPHIA

In The Carrie Diaries, the television prequel to Sex and the City, AnnaSophia Robb stars as a 16-year-old, pre-Manolo, pre-Big Carrie Bradshaw — in 1984.

STEPPING INTO ONE STYLISH PAIR OF SHOES

ROMINA McGUINNESS
life@metronews.ca

On putting the makeup on... and taking it off

"I don't really wear makeup anymore. I kind of stopped because when I'm working, I have it on for up to 15 hours a day. So on the weekends or before work, I only put on moisturizer."

'80s makeup — yay or nay?

"Eighties makeup was just a bunch of colours and crazy neon. I don't know if I love it. The blush was really strong and bright and if you didn't have the skin tone to pull it off, it was way too heavy. But, if you put a piece of paper on your cheek to create that hard, drastic line, that look can be fun."

Her beauty mantra

"Look after your eyebrows! I was given an eyebrow brush on a job once that I still use to this day. My friends make fun of me, but I love it. When I was younger my mother taught me how to apply blush. Get it wrong and there'll be way too much colour and you'll just look warm. Using bronzer is best."

The secret to nailing Carrie's hair: a wig

"I naturally have straight hair, which takes about two hours to curl, so it's faster for me to wear a wig. Carrie wears a lot of updos on the show, so we've been able to use a lot of fun accessories, banana clips and pins."

If she could raid one SATC closet she'd choose...

"Carrie's. I loved the skirts. She has a wild sense of style."

He's Daman. Designer takes couture-loving character back in time

Eric Daman worked with Pat Field to dress Carrie Bradshaw for Sex and the City. Now, the costume designer's dressing her again, albeit a teenage, 1980s version, in the prequel The Carrie Diaries. He talks about how he created the wardrobe for her teenage, 1980s life in The Carrie Diaries.

The wardrobe was such an important part of Sex and the City, it was practically its own character. How much pressure did you feel sourcing the young Carrie's closet for the new show?

I was actually quite stressed out by the thought of having to take on such an overwhelming task. But I was elated to be able to breathe new life into such an amazing fashion icon. The best part of it for me is being about to relive my coming of age '80s angst, from when I was a teen in the Midwest dreaming of a life in New York City.

You've worked with both Carries — Sarah Jessica Parker and AnnaSophia Robb. How do they differ in their approach to her fashion choices?

The approaches are very different. We have to remember that this Carrie is a teenager who goes to public school. She will stay true to her idiosyncratic style, not giving in to pre-determined trends but making her own. So in that sense, there's a similarity.

ROMINA MCGUINNESS/METRO

Eric Daman is also known for styling the cast of Gossip Girl. PROVIDED

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Iconic white dress

Styles of 2013 wedding gowns draw on traditional shapes and fabrics

STEPHANIE ORFORD
For Metro

The bride in a white dress is an icon in our culture. Though the wedding may be a very public affair, the dress is a very personal decision. Luckily, there are styles out there to suit every taste.

"We really grow the styles from season to season," says Penina Levinson, fashion co-ordinator at Paloma Blanca, a Toronto-based wedding gown design house, and its sister line Mikaella Bridal.

The styles of 2013 draw on traditional shapes and fabrics.

Mikaella Bridal all lace gown. MIKAELLA BRIDAL PHOTO

Lace

This intricate fabric is hip again, lending subtle pattern and texture to this year's wedding gowns. At once concealing and revealing, lace can be used in many ways.

Levinson cites ways to update the look of traditional lace, such as lining it with a different colour to make the lace pattern "pop out."

Paloma Blanca gowns this season use lace in several different ways. On a fitted gown with a sweetheart neckline, lace draws attention to the body's curves.

A dress with a ruched lace bodice defines the waist with a ribbon.

Many of Paloma Blanca's veils and boleros have lace edging that complement the dress.

Ruffles

Paloma Blanca has incorporated ruffles into its dresses since 2010, "but they've been redeveloped every season," says Levinson. In 2013, a loose, lightweight ruffle adds volume to skirts, combining with curve-hugging bodices and waist-defining ribbons to create a feminine silhouette.

The Paloma Blanca peplum gown.

"You have kind of your classic ball gown in the shape, but it's a little more fun and flirty and young," Levinson says.

Peplum

Currently cropping up in casual dresses, shirts and jackets for women, the peplum has made its way into bridal fashion, "for a fashion forward bride," Levinson says. The style creates a flare outward from the waist to the hip.

"It makes your waist look tiny," Levinson says.

People can be intimidated by the bold style, she says, "but once they try it on it looks really good on."

Paloma Blanca illusion neckline gown. PALOMA BLANCA PHOTO

Keyhole Backs

This dress style provides an elegant way to balance out covered shoulders by revealing something else — the back. In a keyhole back, sheer shoulder coverings button at the top of the back and open up in a window below.

"If somebody wanted a little coverage for the ceremony, this is an interesting way to be able to do it," Levinson says.

Regardless of the style, a wedding gown should always fit snugly, especially if it's strapless, Levinson advises. "But most of all a dress should make the bride feel beautiful and like a queen."

Mikaella Bridal ruffle skirt gown. MIKAELLA BRIDAL PHOTO

Paloma Blanca all-lace gown. Lace is hip again, lending subtle pattern and texture to this year's wedding gowns.

This year's evil green decor trend

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

Each new year the decor industry picks a single colour trend that will influence the home furnishings and fashion market.

Last year, the colour was called tango tangerine, a bright, pinkish-orange that was upbeat, fun and optimistic. We saw orange peek into some home decor accessories and used a lot in fashion over the last year.

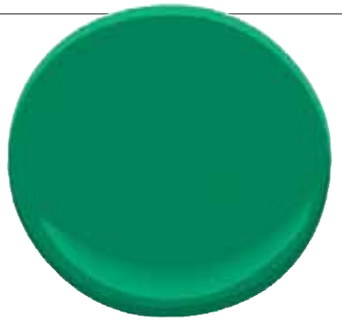
This year, the new colour is emerald green. It's certainly an easier colour to incorporate into home decor than tango tangerine. This green is a throw-back to the glamourous '80s; when the dark jewel-toned colours reigned for that very short time.

Although green is a popular colour to decorate with, any deep colours other than neutrals are almost impossible to incorporate into our existing schemes. If emerald green is a colour you have always loved, then this is your year. For the rest, I say do not get caught up in the hoopla-ha of it all. In about 300 days there will a new colour introduced and perhaps that one will be more fitting to your decor style. If you want to give it a try, here's a few ways to incorporate the colour into your decor scheme.

Use it as the single colour in the room (mixed with an all-over neutral)
Pay homage to this year's trendiest colour by singling it out as the only colour in a room. An all-grey or beige room will come to life with bold uses of this rich green colour.

Go big and make everything emerald green
From carpet, paint colour and upholstery, choose variations of emerald green to create a jewel box of colour in a dining or guest room.

Use it as a little spark of colour
Not sure about emerald green? Perhaps a tiny investment of this colour will make you feel on-trend without committing to it for life. A small stone catch-all box, vase or a silk pillow might just do the trick.



Vibrant green walls look great when punctuated with fresh white or dramatic black. **Emerald Isle from Benjamin Moore Paint**

Emerald upholstery is a commitment best left to disposable slipcovers. **Photo: Supplied**

Ottoman Yama Patchwork Rug, $15/square foot

Emerald green works itself better into a room when mixed with other tones of similar colours. **eCarpetGallery.com**

Siirtolapuutarha Cushion, $59

A dash of green is the best way to implement this year's colour into your existing decor scheme. **EQ3.com**

Contamination list

The Dirty Dozen (in order of contamination):

Apples
Celery
Sweet bell peppers
Peaches
Strawberries
Nectarines
Grapes
Spinach
Lettuce
Cucumbers
Blueberries
Potatoes

The Clean 15 (in order of least contamination):

Onions
Sweet corn
Pineapples
Avocado
Cabbage
Sweet peas
Asparagus
Mangoes
Eggplant
Kiwi
Cantaloupe
Sweet potatoes
Grapefruit
Watermelon
Mushrooms

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Learn to avoid pesticides

What are the dirty dozen and the clean 15?
-Jen, Port Moody, B.C.
The dirty dozen and the clean

QUEEN OF GREEN
Tovah Paglaro
green@metronews.ca

15 refer respectively to the fruits and vegetables that are the most and least contaminated by pesticide use, according to the Environmental Working Group.

Why do we care?
Pesticides are toxic by design. Different pesticides have been linked to a variety of health problems, including hormone disruption, cancer and brain toxicity.

But for most people, switching to organic produce is a gradual process. Because organic foods tend to be more expensive than their counterparts, making informed choices in the produce aisle helps minimize pesticide consumption while keeping the budget in check.

Should you avoid the dirty dozen?
Absolutely not! Fresh fruits and vegetables are always a healthier choice than processed foods. Besides, non-organic processed foods are sure to contain a slough of chemicals too. Instead, let the guide dictate your allocation of organic verses non-organic purchases.

Why eat organic food?
All of this opens up a bigger discussion about the choice to eat organic food — and the reasons that not everyone does. Often, the decision comes down to bottom line.

Non-organic foods cost less money. But there are other costs — hidden costs — that have to be considered too. These include abstract factors like the cost of demanding more from the earth than it can produce and the long-term health costs associated with ingesting chemicals. Also included are tangible variables, like the government subsidization of industrial agriculture and our relative comfort (or discomfort) with foreign investment in commercial Canadian agriculture.

There are also ways to offset the increased out-of-pocket expense incurred by prioritizing organic foods.

Committing to cooking whole foods from scratch can largely counteract the cost of organic food purchases.

Change takes time. The dirty dozen and clean 15 lists are a resource to help you make the best choices for your health and for the earth, whatever your current budget or state of greenness.

Apples top the list of most likely to be contaminated by pesticide. ISTOCK IMAGES

Forget the soups and stews, how about some fresh cannelloni?

If you haven't used your slow cooker for baked pasta dishes, you'll find they turn out well due to the slow gentle heat. Use oven-ready cannelloni for this recipe from Best of Bridge Slow Cooker Cookbook. It stands up better to the long, moist cooking than fresh or regular dried pasta.

1. Grease insert of a 3 1/2- to 4-quart slow cooker.

2. In a bowl, whisk together tomato sauce and milk. Spread 250 ml (1 cup) of the sauce mixture in bottom of slow cooker.

3. In another bowl, whisk together salt, nutmeg, pepper, egg, ricotta and Parmesan. Stir in sweet potato and spinach. Using fingers, fill cannelloni shells with ricotta mixture. Place filled shells side by side in slow cooker, making 2 layers if necessary. Pour remaining sauce over shells.

4. Cover and cook on low for about 6 hours or on high for about 3 hours, until bubbling.

Ingredients

- 750 ml (3 cups) tomato sauce
- 250 ml (1 cup) evaporated milk
- 2 ml (1/2 tsp) salt
- 1 ml (1/4 tsp) ground nutmeg
- 0.5 ml (1/8 tsp) pepper
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 300 ml (1 1/4 cups) ricotta cheese
- 50 ml (1/4 cup) grated Parmesan cheese
- 300 ml (1 1/4 cups) grated peeled sweet potato
- 250 ml (1 cup) packed baby spinach, chopped
- 12 oven-ready cannelloni shells
- 250 ml (1 cup) shredded mozzarella cheese

Sprinkle with mozzarella. Cover and cook on high for about 15 minutes or until mozzarella is melted. **BEST OF BRIDGE SLOW COOKER COOKBOOK BY SALLY VAUGHAN-JOHNSTON & THE BEST OF BRIDGE PUBLISHING LTD. (ROBERT ROSE, ROBERTROSE.CA, 2012)/ THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Sweet Potato Cannelloni

This recipe serves four. THE CANADIAN PRESS H/O

Cookbook of the Week

Slow it right down

Sally Vaughan-Johnston and Best of Bridge are back with this collection of recipes specifically for the slow cooker.

Full of dishes that make meal preparation quick and easy, with ingredients that can be found at any local supermarket across North America, this collection features everything from the perfect choice for your next neighbourhood potluck to elegant appetizers, breakfast and brunch ideas to delectable desserts.

The recipes are categorized into: All-Day Breakfast; Nibbles, Dips and Drinks; Soups, Beef and Veal, Pork and Lamb, Chicken and Turkey, Meatless Mains, Sides and Accompaniments and Desserts. **METRO**

Make the slow cooker do part of the work

This recipe serves four. THE CANADIAN PRESS H/O

Your slow cooker can prepare part of a recipe. Here, it is used to cook polenta. Start this delicious and hearty Vegetable Polenta Casserole meal with a salad.

1. Grease insert of 3 1/2- to 4-quart slow cooker. Grease 33-by-23-cm (13-by-9-inch) baking dish. Place cornmeal, salt and pepper in prepared slow cooker. Gradually add boiling water, whisking constantly until blended. Cover and cook on low 2 to 3 hours, until liquid absorbs and cornmeal is tender.

2. Transfer slow cooker insert to a heat-resistant surface. Stir in cream cheese, 175 ml (3/4 cup) mozzarella and 50 ml (1/4 cup) Parmesan. Spread two-thirds of polenta in prepared baking dish; set aside.

3. Heat oven to 200 C (400 F). Then in skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onions, red pepper, garlic and mushrooms; cook, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes. Stir in pasta sauce. Spread over polenta in baking dish. Drop remaining polenta by spoonfuls over top. Sprinkle with remaining mozzarella and Parmesan. Bake, uncovered, for 25 mins., until heated through and browned. **BEST OF BRIDGE SLOW COOKER COOKBOOK BY SALLY VAUGHAN-JOHNSTON & THE BEST OF BRIDGE PUBLISHING LTD. (ROBERT ROSE, ROBERTROSE.CA, 2012)/ THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Ingredients

- 250 ml (1 cup) cornmeal
- 2 ml (1/2 tsp) salt
- 0.5 ml (1/8 tsp) pepper
- 750 ml (3 cups) boiling water
- 125 g (4 oz) cream cheese, cubed and softened
- 250 ml (1 cup) shredded mozzarella cheese, divided
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) vegetable oil
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 750 ml (3 cups) sliced mushrooms
- 500 ml (2 cups) tomato-based pasta sauce

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Find a variety of toothpastes, gums, candies and sugar alternatives made with Xylitol at Rainbow Foods!
Check out www.rainbowfoods.ca for specials and flyers.

SPECIAL INFORMATION FEATURE

Taking over local taps

New offerings. Craft brewing community joins pop-up phenomenon to taste latest creations

JEFF O'REILLY
For Metro

Guest chefs in unexpected restaurant locations. Cool culinary collaborations with secret ingredients. Special themes or licensed patios where they weren't before. They have been "popping up" all over the National Capital region to great critical acclaim in the local foodie community. So, not to be outdone, the craft brewers' version of the underground "pop-up" is the super cool "Tap Takeover."

Using social media to spread the word, the craft beer community comes out in force to check out the full spectrum of the new, the different, the bold and the unexpected.

Last Saturday, the Westboro Corner Bar celebrated its second anniversary, showing off some of the finest local and provincial craft beers.

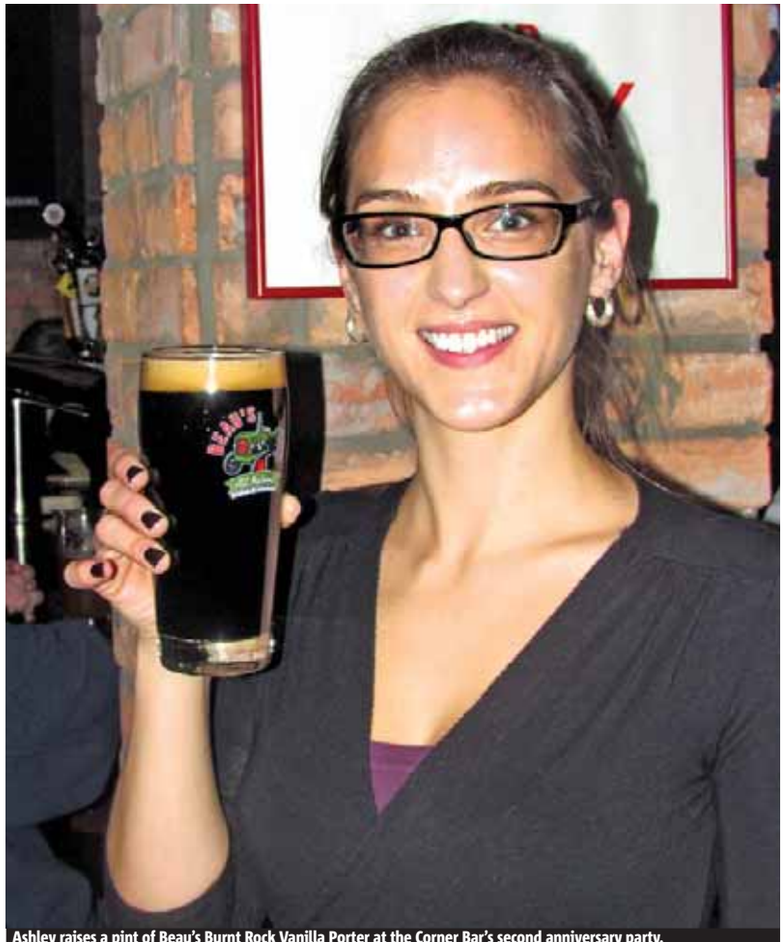
Here is what they were pouring that night: Kichesippi exclusively launched its Wuchak Black Cascadian Dark Ale, along with its Logger Pennsylvania Porter; Broadhead showed off its latest version of Wildcard IPA (this one uses only the resiny Polaris hops); Muskoka brought out its seasonal Winter Beard Double Chocolate Cranberry Stout and the massive Twice As Mad Tom Double IPA; Flying Monkeys was flying high with its Pilot IPA; Mill Street was well represented with its Vanilla Porter, Paradise IPA, Don Valley Bench Estate and Doppel Pils; and, finally, Beau's proudly produced its Belgian IPA and its latest Burnt Rock Vanilla Porter — the fifth in its Pro-Am series — a real beautiful collaboration with Member of Barleyment Patrick Boisvenue, who was granted the honour when he was crowned the grand prize winner in last summer's National Capital Craft Beer Week Home Brewing Contest.

Delicious roasty malts

"Beau's Burnt Rock Vanilla Porter (4.9 per cent alcohol by volume) pours almost black with faint, deep ruby hues and a firm, taupe foam head. A full nose of rich vanilla, chocolate and roast is the tempting prelude to warming flavours of sweet vanilla, chocolate, caramel and loads of delicious roasty malts."

Beau's Burnt Rock Vanilla Porter (4.9 per cent alcohol by volume) pours almost black with faint, deep ruby hues and a firm, taupe foam head. A full nose of rich vanilla, chocolate and roast is the tempting prelude to warming flavours of sweet vanilla, chocolate, caramel and loads of delicious roasty malts. The interplay of sweetness to roasted bitterness, back to sweet, then to the slightly bitter, but nice, dry finish in this delightful, medium bodied beer is really nicely done.

Certified 100 per cent organic, as always, you really can taste the difference quality makes. Beau's Burnt Rock is available for a short time on tap at a handful of local pubs and, of course, as part of the BYBO (Buy Your Beau's Online) program (beaus.ca).



Ashley raises a pint of Beau's Burnt Rock Vanilla Porter at the Corner Bar's second anniversary party.
JEFF O'REILLY/FOR METRO

Fortified for a cold night

SEASONAL SIPS
Allyson Bycraft
For Metro

Fortified wines are a category of wines that have had a grape spirit added to them. Port and sherry are two common examples. They are usually 16 to 20 per cent alcohol, so are very warming, perfect for sipping on a cold night by the fire:

Almirante Marques del Real Tesoro Oloroso Sherry (LCBO #309963, $16.95). Oloroso sherries are aged for long periods in older barrels. The barrels are deliberately kept less than full to encourage a controlled oxidation, which gives the wine a brownish colour and the distinctive nutty sherry bouquet and flavour. Olorosos run the gamut on the sweetness scale, but this one is dry.

Dow's Late Bottled Vintage Port 2007 (LCBO #613927, $16.95) like all port, comes from the Douro region of Portugal. Port is always sweet and comes in two categories — ruby and tawny. Ruby Ports, like the Dow's LBV, retain their deep, red colour and fruit flavours because they are aged in casks that are kept completely full, thus eliminating oxidation. LBVs are usually pretty "fiery" but are good value, and much less expensive than a true vintage port.

Both are available at Vintages Saturday. ALLYSON BYCRAFT

A taste of the south

Union 613. 'Cool' restaurant has become the place to grab a drink and quiet bite to eat

SAMANTHA EVERTS
For Metro

The buttermilk-fried yardbird is a menu staple at Union 613, located at 315 Somersete St. W. SAMANTHA EVERTS/FOR METRO

Fun and whimsical decor

- Winter menu highlights include Dr. Pepper and soy nagano country ribs with tobacco onions and benne seeds.
- A small basement speakeasy is scheduled to open in the spring.
- The decor is fun and whimsical with blunted knives as beer tap pulls.

Union 613 is undeniably cool. Stepping inside you will feel like you are stepping into the south, but with a menu where regional product abounds.

It has become the place to grab a drink and quiet bite before a night out or a chance to unwind at the communal dining tables and make new friends. Vintage glassware is used for sides like coleslaw, or bourbon-spiked cocktails. And these folks know their bourbon.

Just like the south, get ready to get down and dirty. A pot of boiled-in-brine peanuts is brought from the friendly servers as soon as you sit down. While a fried buffalo pig ear may not be for everyone, make sure to order plenty of sides with your main. We sunk our teeth into the brown butter cornbread, which was so sweet and mouth-watering we could have been eating pure cake.

The cornbread was served hot in a cast-iron skillet and complemented the flavours of the refreshing Clarmell chevre salad with spring greens, watermelon and light vinaigrette. Since this review, the fried green tomatoes have been removed from the menu, but their crisp batter and marriage with tangy pimento cheese and bacon chunks lives on.

A menu staple, and for good reason, is the buttermilk-fried yardbird. Lightly dusted in cornmeal and served on a metal baking sheet, the crispy skin held juicy meat inside. The savoury flavours were subtle, but heightened with a splash of pepper vinegar.

That southern hospitality is extended through the friendly servers, as well as the retro funk and soul music pumping from the speakers.

Union 613 is located at 315 Somerset St. W. For more, see union613.ca.

Spanish wines span the style spectrum

IF I HAD $100 ... TO SPEND AT VINTAGES

SUSAN DESJARDINS
For Metro

Take an exotic tour of Spain's different geographic wine regions and delectable wine styles through the main feature in the Jan. 19 LCBO Vintages release. As well, you could savour some fabulous floral wines from B.C.'s Okanagan Valley or peppery reds from Bordeaux.

Jackson-Triggs 'Niagara Estate Grand Reserve' Shiraz 2010, Niagara (LCBO #317941, $19.95)
Substantial, mingling succulent spiced black fruit, menthol and a dazzling peppery note.

Alvarez de Toledo Godello 2010, Spain (LCBO #308049, $13.95)
Rich, complex, round and ripe — think peach, fresh citrus and mineral.

Savour the newest wines from Vintages. JOHN FOXX/STOCKBYTE/THINKSTOCK

Gray Monk Gewürztraminer 2011, Okanagan (LCBO #321588, $19.95)
Off dry and sumptuous — classic lychee, floral notes and ripe spiced fruit abound.

Borsao 'Tres Picos' Garnacha 2010, Spain (LCBO #273748, $19.95)
Dry, velvety and full bodied, it's a mouthful of tasty fruit, exotic spice, herbs and toasty oak.

Château Puisseguin Curat 2010, France (LCBO #307140, $19.95)
A smooth, well-balanced award winner, showcasing ripe fruit, pepper and spice.

GRAND TOTAL: $93.75
FOR MORE ABOUT THESE AND OTHER WINES, SEE SAVVYCOMPANY.CA.

Azarenka blazes into 3rd round Down Under

Australian Open. World No. 1 makes short work of Daniilidou at Rod Laver Arena

Victoria Azarenka is starting to find some rhythm in her Australian Open title defence, almost dancing onto Rod Laver Arena to some disco tunes before racing through her 6-1, 6-0 second-round win over Eleni Daniilidou in 55 minutes.

With temperatures forecast to top 39 C, Azarenka clearly didn't want to be out in the heat.

"I felt like I'm back into the competitive mode," she said. "I was really focused — that was for sure the best part of the game for me."

No. 94-ranked Daniilidou only won 10 points in the first set and, despite having triple break point in the fourth game of the second, couldn't win a game in the second set.

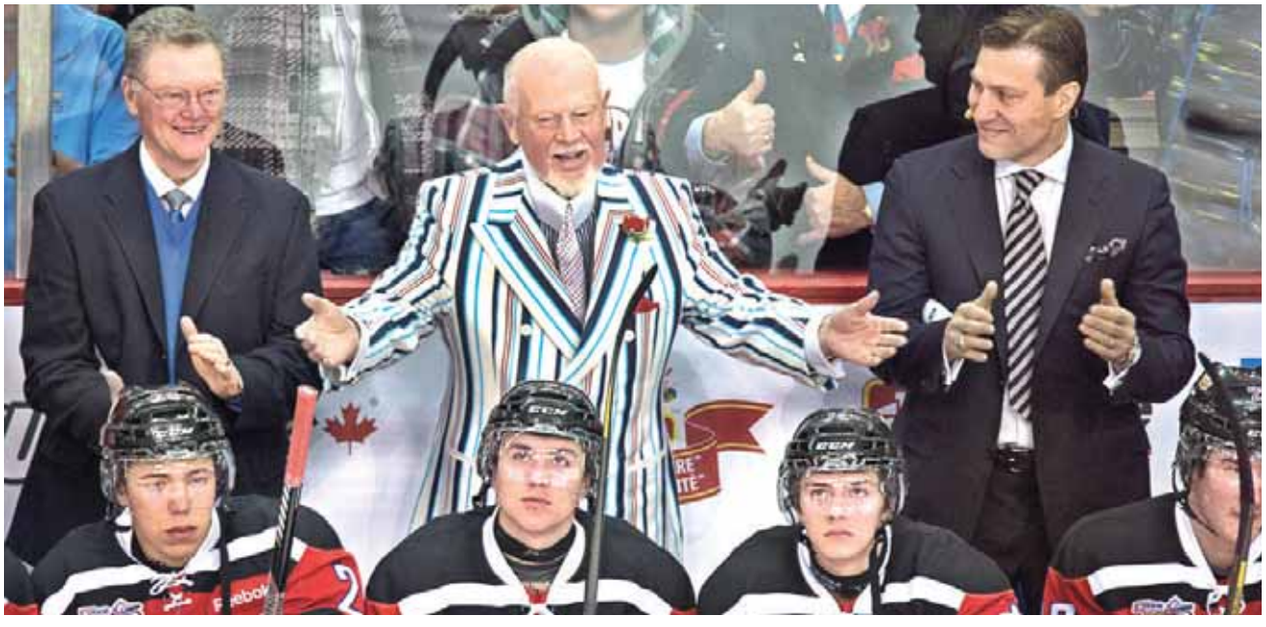
Azarenka's lopsided win came a day after No. 2-ranked Maria Sharapova, the woman she beat in the Australian final last year, recorded her second 6-0, 6-0 win of the tournament. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

By the numbers

26

Azarenka won her first major at the Aussie Open last year, during a 26-match win streak to start the season.

Victoria Azarenka during Wednesday's match in Melbourne, Australia.
VINCE CALIGIURI/GETTY IMAGES



Cherry looking cheery in Halifax

Don Cherry gestures from the bench as assistants Brian Kilrea — former bench boss of the Ottawa 67's — and former NHLer Nick Kypreos, right, look on at the CHL Top Prospects Game in Halifax on Wednesday night. The event features 40 of the top draft-eligible Canadian junior hockey players chosen by Cherry and opposing coach, the legendary Bobby Orr. Team Orr won 3-0. ANDREW VAUGHAN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

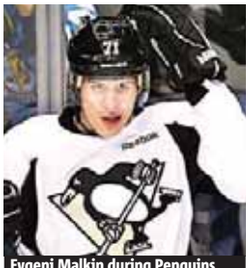
NHL. Malkin adjusting quickly after stint in Russia

While the rest of his Pittsburgh Penguins teammates got taped up before practice on Tuesday, Evgeni Malkin ducked off to the side and picked up a couple of personal items that'd been waiting for him during his working vacation in his native Russia.

You know, just the Hart Trophy. Oh, and the Art Ross Trophy for leading the league in scoring, too.

Despite being jet lagged, he practised for nearly three hours on Monday and appeared to be just fine on Tuesday.

"I'm ready," he said. "I'm in good shape. I'm ready to play (the season opener in) Philadelphia. The first game we've got to start hard with lots of hits. I have no injuries, nothing is sore." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Evgeni Malkin during Penguins practice in Pittsburgh on Monday.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL

Zajac signs 8-year deal with Devils

The New Jersey Devils have signed centre Travis Zajac to a long-term contract.

Devils president and general manager Lou Lamoriello announced the deal on Wednesday, shortly after Zajac scored a goal in a scrimmage against Albany of the AHL. The deal runs eight years, and pays Zajac, who should be the No. 1 centre this season, $46 million.

Lamoriello said the two sides had started to work on the new contract before the NHL lockout began in September.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL. Iginla returns, thinks he'll be ready for opener

Jarome Iginla practised at Flames training camp for the first time this season Wednesday. The captain believes he'll be ready to play in Sunday's season-opener against the San Jose Sharks.

The 35-year-old right-winger missed the first three days of training camp because of a groin injury.

"Thankfully I felt really good out there today," Iginla said following practice. "I didn't feel it and it felt way better than last week. Last week, it didn't feel very good at all.

"It was a good pace out there as a group and a good amount of volume."

Quoted

"Hopefully it's (an) issue that will never come up again."

Flames captain Jarome Iginla who skated for the first time Wednesday after sitting out the first three days of training camp with a groin injury.

The Flames were on the ice for two hours of drills and scrimmages Wednesday in front of about 400 people at Scotiabank Saddledome.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Trestman to take on Bears' top job

NFL. Former Alouette will return south of the border, where he has served for eight teams

The Chicago Bears hired Montreal Alouettes coach Marc Trestman on Wednesday to replace the fired Lovie Smith and gave him two basic tasks — fix the offence and lead the team to the playoffs on a consistent basis.

How he meshes with quarterback Jay Cutler could go a long way toward determining his success.

It's the first NFL head-coaching job for Trestman, 57, a long-time assistant in the league who spent the past five seasons coaching the Alouettes, leading them to a 59-31 regular-season record and three Grey Cup appearances, winning twice.

Prior to arriving in the CFL in 2008, Trestman spent time in the NCAA coaching at Miami and North Carolina State and served in the NFL as a quarterback coach, running back coach and offensive co-ordinator with Minnesota (twice), Tampa Bay, Cleveland, San Francisco, Detroit, Arizona, Oakland and Miami.

Chicago general manager Phil Emery cast a wide net in his search, meeting with at least 13 candidates. Besides Trestman, he also brought back Seattle Seahawks offensive co-ordinator Darrell Bevell and the Indianapolis Colts' Bruce Arians for second interviews.

Trestman wasted little time starting to assemble his staff.

A person familiar with the situation said the Bears hired New Orleans Saints offensive line coach Aaron Kromer as their offensive co-ordinator, hoping to revive a unit that often sputtered with Mike Tice calling the plays.

The Dallas Cowboys, meanwhile, reported on their website that special teams coach Joe DeCamillis was leaving to become Chicago's assistant head coach/special teams co-ordinator. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

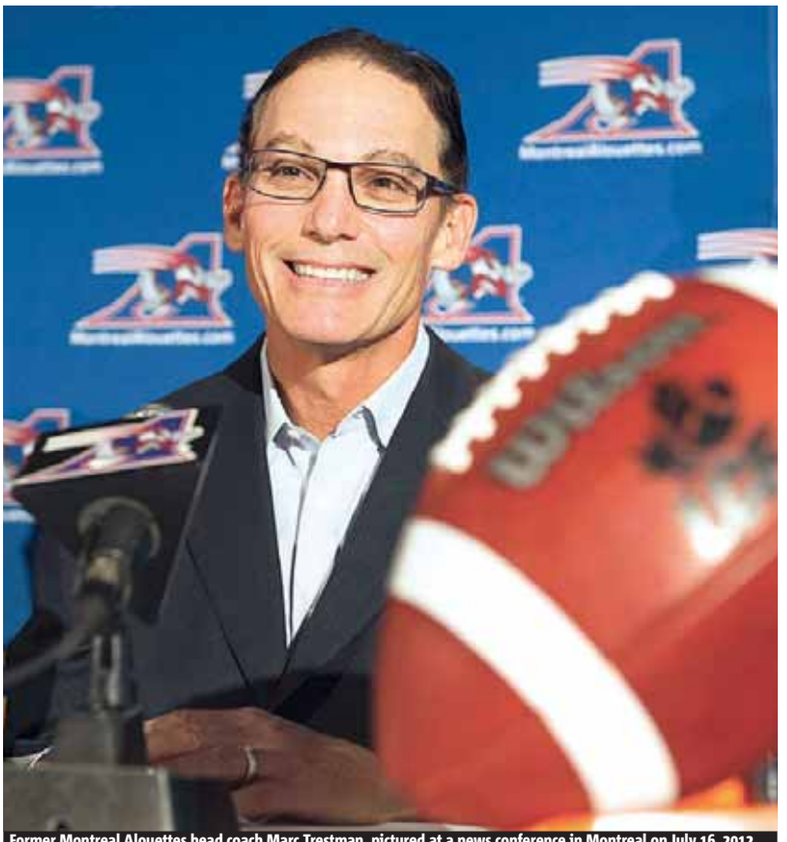
Not ready to retire

QB Calvillo committed to 20th season

The Montreal Alouettes will have a new head coach in 2013, but a familiar face remains under centre.

Quarterback Anthony Calvillo isn't retiring. There were thoughts the 40-year-old might have a change of heart with Marc Trestman's departure, but the veteran quarterback emphatically stated he's all in for a 20th CFL season.

"One thing I've learned, I'm always going to trust the powers that be, (owner Robert) Wetenhall and (GM) Jim Popp, to get the right people in here to help us win," Calvillo told reporters in Montreal.
THE CANADIAN PRESS



Former Montreal Alouettes head coach Marc Trestman, pictured at a news conference in Montreal on July 16, 2012, has been hired by the Chicago Bears to replace the fired Lovie Smith. RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

NFL

Chip Kelly goes back on decision, joins Eagles

In the end, Chip Kelly chose the NFL, giving the Eagles their guy.

Philadelphia hired Kelly on Wednesday, just 10 days after he decided to stay at Oregon. The 49-year-old Kelly, known as an offensive innovator, becomes the 21st coach in team history and replaces Andy Reid, who was fired on Dec. 31 after a 4-12 season.

He'll be introduced at a news conference Thursday.

Kelly was 46-7 in four years at Oregon and recently led the No. 2 Ducks to a victory over Kansas State in the Fiesta Bowl on Jan. 3. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Baseball

Jays farm hand banned 50 games

Toronto Blue Jays pitcher Alan Farina has been suspended 50 games following the right-hander's second positive test under baseball's minor league drug program.

Farina is currently on the roster of Single-A Dunedin Blue Jays of the Florida State League.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Coming clean. Armstrong says he 'left it all on the table' in Oprah interview

Lance Armstrong said Wednesday that viewers can judge for themselves how candid he was in his interview with Oprah Winfrey.

"I left it all on the table with her and when it airs the people can decide," he said in a text message to The Associated Press.

Armstrong responded to a report in the New York Daily News, citing an unidentified source, that he was not contrite when he acknowledged during Monday's taping with Winfrey that he used performance-enhancing drugs.

He's also held conversations with U.S. anti-doping officials, touching off speculation that the team leader who demanded loyalty from others may soon face some very tough choices himself: whether to co-operate and name those who aided, knew about or helped cover up a sophisticated doping ring that Armstrong ran on his tour-winning U.S. Postal Service squads.

"I have no idea what the future holds other than me holding my kids," he said.

Armstrong's interview with Winfrey won't begin airing until Thursday night, but already some people want to hear more — under oath — before he's allowed to compete again in elite triathlons, a sport he returned to after retiring from cycling in 2011.

A photo from the taping of Oprah and Lance Armstrong: The Worldwide Exclusive. COURTESY OF HARPO STUDIOS, INC./GEORGE BURNS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In addition to stripping him of all seven of his Tour de France titles last year, anti-doping officials banned Armstrong for life from sanctioned events.

Former teammate Frankie Andreu, one of several riders Armstrong cast aside on his ride to the top of the sport, said no one is better-suited to provide anti-doping authorities with a blueprint for cleaning up the sport.

"Lance knows everything that happened," Andreu said. "He's the one who knows who did what because he was the ringleader. It's up to him how much he wants to expose."
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
d-Miami	24	12	.667	—
d-New York	24	13	.649	½
Brooklyn	23	15	.605	2
d-Indiana	24	16	.600	2
Chicago	21	15	.583	3
Atlanta	21	16	.568	3½
Boston	20	17	.541	4½
Milwaukee	19	18	.514	5½
Philadelphia	16	23	.410	9½
Toronto	14	24	.368	11
Orlando	14	24	.368	11
Detroit	14	24	.368	11
Charlotte	9	29	.237	16
Cleveland	9	31	.225	17
Washington	7	28	.200	16½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
d-Oklahoma City	30	8	.789	—
d-L.A. Clippers	30	9	.769	½
d-San Antonio	29	11	.725	2
Memphis	24	12	.667	5
Golden State	23	13	.639	6
Denver	24	16	.600	7
Houston	21	18	.538	9½
Portland	20	18	.526	10
Utah	21	19	.525	10
Minnesota	16	19	.457	12½
L.A. Lakers	17	21	.447	13
Dallas	16	23	.410	14½
Sacramento	14	24	.368	16
Phoenix	13	27	.325	18
New Orleans	12	26	.316	18

Wednesday's results
Orlando 97, Indiana 86
Chicago at Toronto
Brooklyn at Atlanta
Houston at Dallas
Denver at Oklahoma City
New Orleans at Boston
Memphis at San Antonio
Cleveland at Portland
Washington at Sacramento
Miami at Golden State

Tuesday's results
Indiana 103, Charlotte 76
New Orleans 111, Philadelphia 99
Brooklyn 113, Toronto 106
L.A. Clippers 117, Houston 109
Denver 115, Portland 111, OT
L.A. Lakers 104, Milwaukee 88

Thursday's games — All Times Eastern
New York vs. Detroit at London, England, 3 p.m.
L.A. Clippers at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
Milwaukee at Phoenix, 9 p.m.
Miami at L.A. Lakers, 10:30 p.m.

TENNIS

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

At Melbourne, Australia
Wednesday's results
MEN
Singles
Second Round

Novak Djokovic (1), Serbia, def. Ryan Harrison, U.S., 6-1, 6-2, 6-3.

David Ferrer (4), Spain, def. Tim Smyczek, U.S., 6-0, 7-5, 4-6, 6-3.

Tomas Berdych (5), Czech Rep., def. Guillaume Rufin, France, 6-2, 6-2, 6-4.

Janko Tipsarevic (8), Serbia, def. Lukas Lacko, Slovakia, 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 7-5.

Nicolas Almagro (10), Spain, def. Daniel Gimeno-Traver, Spain, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2.

Stanislas Wawrinka (15), Switzerland, def. Tobias Kamke, Germany, 6-3, 7-6 (4), retired.

Kei Nishikori (16), Japan, def. Carlos Berlocq, Argentina, 7-6 (4), 6-4, 6-1.

Sam Querrey (20), U.S., def. Brian Baker, U.S., 6-7 (2), 1-1, retired.

Fernando Verdasco (22), Spain, def. Xavier Malisse, Belgium, 6-1, 6-3, 6-2.

Evgeny Donskoy, Russia, def. Mikhail Youzhny (23), Russia, 3-6, 7-6 (4), 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

Jerzy Janowicz (24), Poland, def. Somdev Devvarman, India, 6-7 (10), 3-6, 6-1, 6-0, 7-5.

Jurgen Melzer (26), Austria, def. Roberto Bautista Agut, Spain, 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-7 (3), 6-3, 6-2.

Marcos Baghdatis (28), Cyprus, def. Tatsuma Ito, Japan, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-2.

Radek Stepanek (31), Czech Rep., def. Feliciano Lopez, Spain, 6-2, 6-2, 6-4.

Julien Benneteau (32), France, def. Edouard Roger-Vasselin, France, 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 (5), 7-6 (5).

Kevin Anderson, South Africa, def. Andrey Kuznetsov, Russia, 6-1, 7-5, 6-4.

Doubles
First Round

Mahesh Bhupathi, India, and **Daniel Nestor (5), Toronto**, def. Pablo Andujar and Guillermo Garcia-Lopez, Spain, 6-2, 6-4.

WOMEN
Singles
Second Round

Maria Sharapova (2), Russia, def. Misaki Doi, Japan, 6-0, 6-0.

Agnieszka Radwanska (4), Poland, def. Irina-Camelia Begu, Romania, 6-3, 6-3.

Angelique Kerber (5), Germany, def. Lucie Hradecka, Czech Rep., 6-3, 6-1.

Li Na (6), China, def. Olga Govortsova, Belarus, 6-2, 7-5.

Maria Sharapova (2), Russia, def. Misaki Doi, Japan, 6-0, 6-0.

Agnieszka Radwanska (4), Poland, def. Irina-Camelia Begu, Romania, 6-3, 6-3.

Angelique Kerber (5), Germany, def. Lucie Hradecka, Czech Rep., 6-3, 6-1.

Li Na (6), China, def. Olga Govortsova, Belarus, 6-2, 7-5.

Zheng Jie, China, def. Sam Stosur (9), Australia, 6-4, 1-6, 7-5.

Marion Bartoli (11), France, def. Vesna Dolonc, Serbia, 7-5, 6-0.

Ana Ivanovic (13), Serbia, def. Chan Yung-jan, Taiwan, 7-5, 1-6, 6-4.

Valeria Savinykh, Russia, def. Dominika Cibulkova (15), Slovakia, 7-6 (6), 6-4.

Julia Goerges (18), Germany, def. Romina Oprandi, Switzerland, 6-3, 6-2.

Ekaterina Makarova (19), Russia, def. Stephanie Foretz Gacon, France, 6-3, 6-3.

Jelena Jankovic (22), Serbia, def. Maria Joao Koehler, Portugal, 2-6, 7-6 (5), 6-2.

Kirsten Flipkens, Belgium, def. Klara Zakopalova (23), Czech Rep., 6-1, 6-0.

Venus Williams (25), U.S., def. Alize Cornet, France, 6-3, 6-3.

Sorana Cirstea (27), Romania, def. Kristyna Pliskova, Czech Rep., 1-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Madison Keys, U.S., def. Tamira Paszek (30), Austria, 6-2, 6-1.

Heather Watson, Britain, def. Ksenia Pervak, Kazakhstan, 4-6, 7-6 (7), 6-2.

NFL

DIVISIONAL PLAYOFFS

Sunday's results
AFC — New England 41 Houston 28
NFC — Atlanta 30 Seattle 28
Saturday's results
AFC — Baltimore 38 Denver 35 (2OT)
NFC — San Francisco 45 Green Bay 31

CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Sunday's games — All Times Eastern
NFC — San Francisco at Atlanta, 3 p.m.
AFC — Baltimore at New England, 6:30 p.m.

SUPER BOWL XLVII

Sunday, Feb. 3
At New Orleans, La.
AFC vs. NFC champions, 6 p.m.

Horoscopes

Aries
March 21 - April 20
Career-wise this is a great day to start something new. If you have been thinking about changing job or vocation, what happens over the next 24 hours could make up your mind. Then all you have to do is act.

Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You are very much flavour of the month at the moment but it won't last forever, so make sure you take advantage of other people's good feelings towards you. This is also an excellent time to socialize.

Gemini
May 22 - June 21
If you find yourself in a favourable position today, you must make good use of it. Don't miss out on a wonderful opportunity because you think it would be wrong to do well for yourself while others are struggling.

Cancer
June 22 - July 23
If someone says something critical about you today, don't automatically assume they are trying to put you down. More likely, they are trying to make you aware of the mistakes you've been making. Listen and learn.

Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
In both your personal life and in your work, you are about to reap the rewards for past labours. All that is required of you is to sit back and enjoy the good things heading your way. You can do that.

Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Cosmic activity in your fellow Earth sign of Capricorn has been good for you lately. Today's Venus-Pluto union will bring out the passionate side of your nature, which will be good for those you love!

Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You will find it easy to show affection today. You don't need to go over the top but you do need to let partners and relatives know how much you love them and how much you appreciate their efforts.

Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
With Venus, planet of romance, linked to your ruler Pluto in one of the more outgoing areas of your chart, you won't be shy about showing your affection today. When Scorpios love, they love without limits.

Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Ignore those who say you should be pushing yourself harder because they do not know what they are talking about. If everything comes so easily to you, why should you make it difficult? Life is there to be enjoyed.

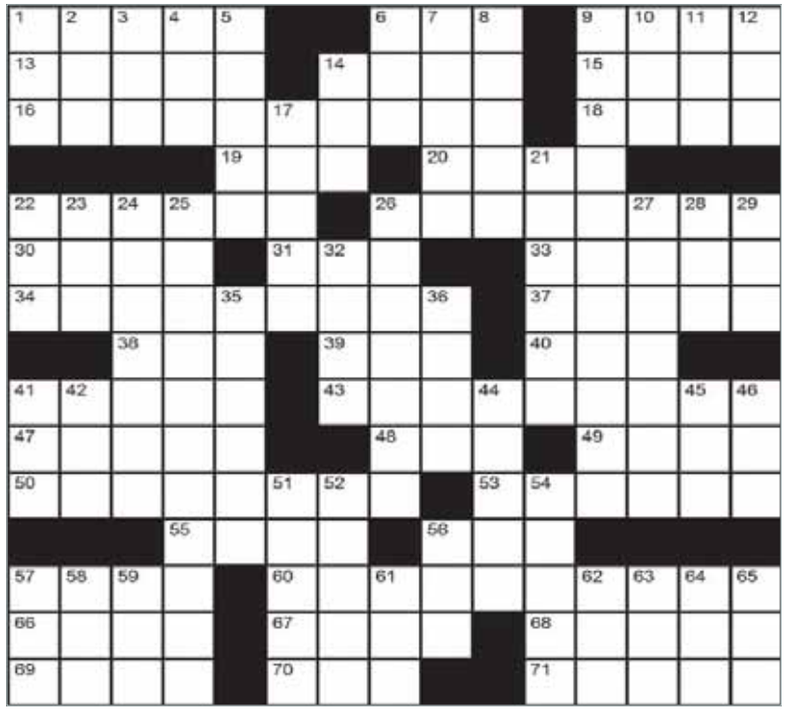
Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You will be even more intense than usual today. Pluto in your sign will make you more passionate and help you to move mountains through sheer force of personality. Be a catalyst for change.

Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
There is so much in your life you have to be thankful for, yet still you are focusing on things that went wrong. Get over it. When the Sun enters your sign at the weekend you must be ready to move on.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Cosmic activity in the area of your chart that governs friendships and group activities means you will attract people who share your desire to improve things. Together you can change the world for the better. SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across & Down

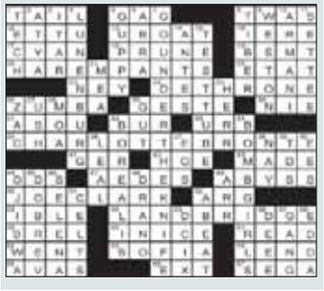
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Island of wild horses in Canada
6. Michael Jackson song
9. Maritime folk tune: "Song for the __"
13. Nature photographer Mr. Adams
14. 'Star Wars' universe knight
15. Actress, __ Rachel Wood
16. New "American Idol" judge: 2 wds.
18. Cozy corners
19. Deryck Whibley's band, __ 41
20. "Me neither.": 2 wds.
22. Blessings
26. Accessorized like The Penguin
30. School subj.
31. Bird of Australia
33. Celebrity chef Ms. De Laurentiis
34. Saskatoon band, The __
37. Feminizing suffixes
38. Director Spike
39. Game-on-the-green org.
40. Teacher's pen
41. Loud
43. Eminem alias: 2 wds.
47. Armada
48. 'Client' completer
49. Halo
50. Scanned-at-checkout things: 2 wds.
53. Is allowed: 2 wds.
55. McGill, e.g.
56. Launch site
57. House entrance
60. Victoria-born actress Meghan Ory's fairytale "Once Upon a Time" role, with Red: 2 wds.
66. Lucy __ Montgomery
67. Donated
68. Halle Berry's Canadian ex, Gabriel __
69. Middles, mini-ly
70. Finish
71. Ms. Witherspoon

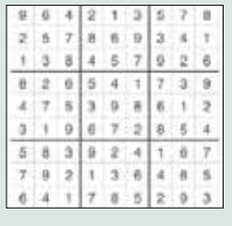
Down
1. __ Andreas Fault
2. Tropical cuckoo bird
3. Graduate's degree, e.g.
4. Currency in Albania
5. Beethoven's title lady
6. Mr. Mulroney
7. A Bell for __ (John Hersey Pulitzer-winning novel)
8. Mustard variety
9. Alberta city: 2 wds.
10. "__ had it!"
11. Sprinted
12. 'A' of Q&A, for short
14. Mr. Carrey
17. Pondered
21. Canadian communications company
22. Baseball execs
23. Cheerleader's cheer!
24. Designer's studio
25. Poutine pieces: 2 wds.
26. J.K. Rowling's non-magical folks
27. Some horse-drawn carriages
28. Dutch city
29. "__ Boot" (1981)
32. Cleans the floors
35. Quarterback Mr. Manning
36. Go on a yacht
41. Canadian cinematic org.
42. 'Motor' suffix
44. Actress Ms. Fox
45. "__. _ & the Women" (2000)
46. Former-NBAer, __ Ming
51. Mournful melody
52. Mineral water brand
54. __ Allan Poe
56. Dessert choice
57. Rap legends, Run-_ _ _
58. Porridge particle
59. __ Lady Peace
61. Home theatre item
62. Shade
63. UK award since 1917
64. Alternatives
65. Nice 'n Easy product

Yesterday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



4				6				3
	2				7	8	1	
	7		9	5				
	1					2		
5		7				4		1
		8					3	
				9	8		4	
	5	2	7				6	
9				2				7

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